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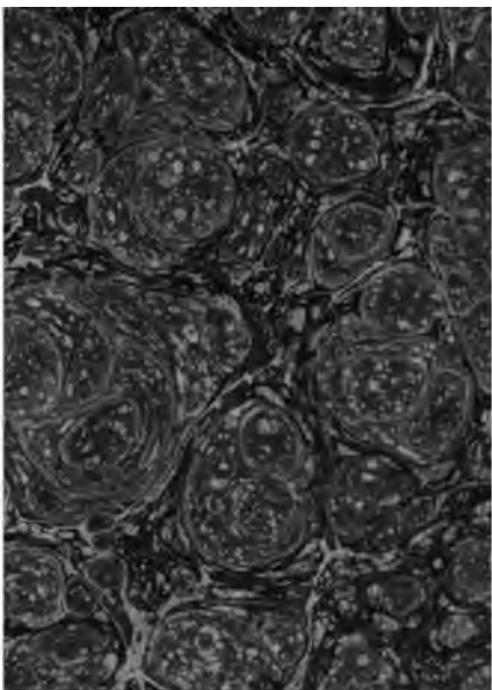
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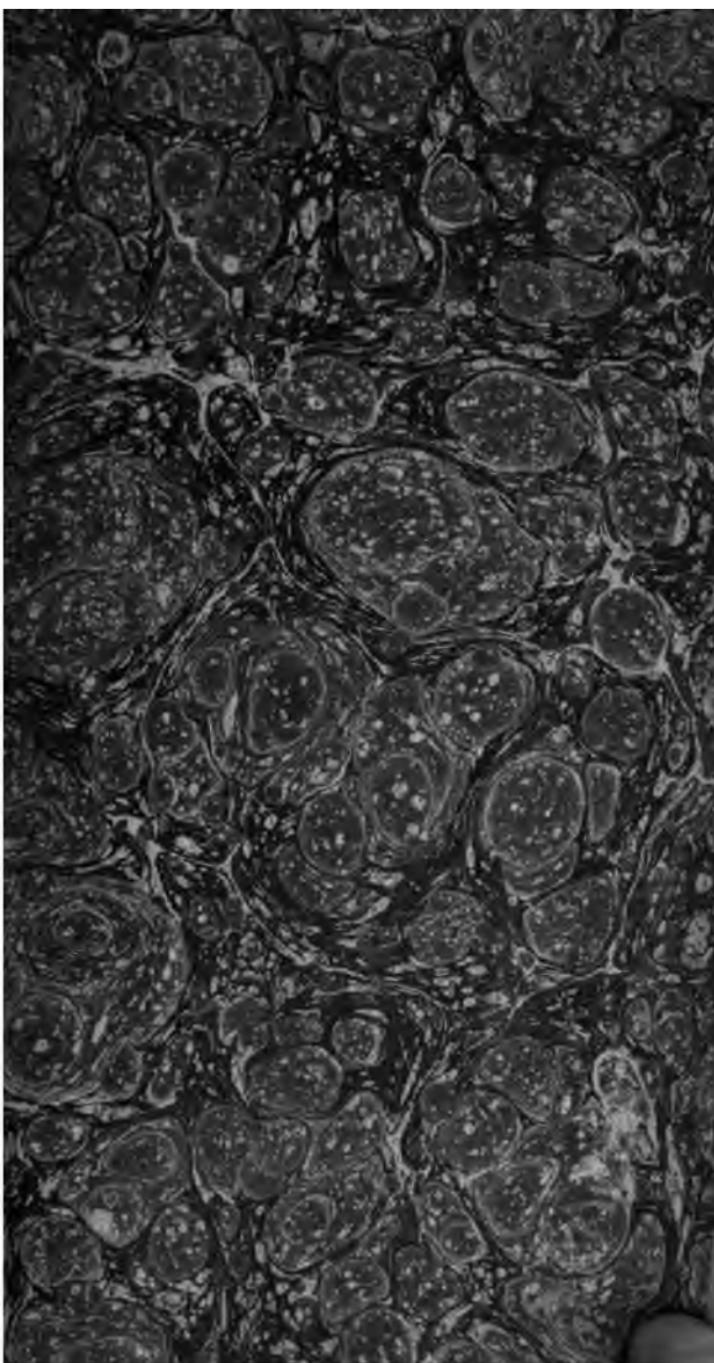
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**K E Y**

TO THE

**NEW TESTAMENT,**

GIVING

AN ACCOUNT OF THE

SEVERAL BOOKS, THEIR CONTENTS,

THEIR AUTHORS,

AND OF

THE TIMES, PLACES, AND OCCASIONS,

ON WHICH THEY WERE RESPECTIVELY

WRITTEN.

BY THOMAS PERCY.

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1806.

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TO THE  
HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND  
S H U T E,  
LORD BISHOP OF LANDAFF.

MY LORD,

THE favourable opinion which your Lordship was pleased to entertain of this little Work in the first Edition, has induced me to give it a revisal, and, by removing some inaccuracies, to render it less unworthy your acceptance.

That so slight a performance should have been able to attract your notice, I must attribute to that vigilant, unremitted attention, which so eminently distinguishes your Lordship's conduct, and makes you esteem no attempt undeserving your regard, which has the remotest tendency to promote the interests of religion or learning.

That

....., and will, some of  
have adopted it, as a pre-  
pendium to be put into  
of the younger student  
entrance on a course of s-  
cience. If it contribute  
degree to make the Holy  
more attentively read, a  
understood, I shall esteem  
uliar happiness to have  
opportunity of testifying the  
respect with which I am,

My LORD,

V..... T.....

## P R E F A C E.

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**A** CLEAR introductory illustration of the several Books of the New Testament, shewing the design of their writers, the nature of their contents, and whatever else is previously necessary to their being read with understanding, is a work that, if well executed, must prove the best of commentaries, and frequently supersede the want of all other. Like an intelligent guide, it directs the Reader right at his first setting out, and thereby saves him the trouble of much after-inquiry : or, like a map of a country through which he is to travel, if consulted before-hand, it gives him a general view of the journey, and prevents his being afterwards lost and bewildered.

A 3

That

That the following little work will be found to answer this flattering description, the Compiler dares not take upon him to assert ; he can only say, that the contents are chiefly extracted from two eminent writers, who have particularly distinguished themselves in this branch of sacred criticism, and have lately thrown great light upon the subject.

The first of these is, Mr Professor Michaelis, of his Majesty's University of Gottingen, whose "Introductory Lectures to the Sacred Books of the New Testament," translated from the German, were published, in one volume 4to, in 1761 \*. The other is the Rev.  
Dr

\* Since this translation of Mr Michaelis's book was published, that eminent Writer has very much improved and enlarged his Work in the original German ; and it will give satisfaction to the learned Reader to be informed, that a translation of this

Dr Lardner, whose “ History of the “ Apostles and Evangelists, Writers “ of the New Testament, with Re-“ marks and Observations on every “ Book,” was printed in three vo-  
lumes 8vo, in 1760. The former of these has displayed so much inge-  
nuity and discernment, and the latter such a depth of learning, as give the greatest advantage to such as would avail themselves of their labours.

But as their works are not of portable size, and contain a multi-  
tude of curious disquisitions not within the reach of the generality of readers, the Editor was tempted to give a short abstract of their re-  
spective contents, cleared from all miscellaneous digressions, and re-  
duced within a small compass for the

this excellent performance, with all the late addi-  
tions and improvements of the deceased Author,  
may soon be expected.

the pocket. He has not, however, merely confined himself to those two writers, but has enriched his work from other authors ; thus, in the Key to the writings of the several Evangelists, a full account is given of the curious hypothesis of the learned and ingenious Dr Owen, who, in his “Observations on the “Four Gospels,” 8vo, 1764, has opened a new source of information, and, by comparing the original language of the several Evangelists, has started many new hints, which had escaped former inquirers. If the Doctor should find a difficulty proposed in the following pages, in respect to one part of his scheme : he will also see a solution offered, which the Editor apprehends will give new strength and consistency to the whole argument.

Besides these late writers, recourse was occasionally had to the learned

learned and useful labours of Pyle, Doddridge, Bengelius, Dupin, and other former critics and commentators ; from each of whom such parts were selected as seemed most solid and judicious ; forming, in the whole, what, it is hoped, will be found a clear, concise, and not inconsistent compilation ; in which the Editor frankly acknowledges that very little will be found of his own, and that he has no other merit than that of bringing into one compendium whatever he thought was most excellent in so many valuable writers.

After this little work was first committed to the press, the Editor was favoured by an ingenious friend with the short Account of the several sects and heresies that prevailed in the times of Christ and his apostles. A general knowledge of those is so necessary to our right understanding

understanding the sacred writings, in which one or other of them are constantly alluded to, that this work would have been imperfect without it ; it is therefore prefixed, by way of Introduction. In compiling this brief sketch, the Writer acknowledges himself indebted, not only to the valuable works of Godwyn, Prideaux, Calmet, and Stackhouse, but to the very learned System of Ecclesiastical History by Mr Chancellor Mosheim, of the University of Gottingen.

To the same friend the Editor is also indebted for the short Analysis or Key to the Prophecies contained in the Revelations, with which this little book is concluded.

1765.

CON-

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Key to the Prophecies in the Re

## INTRODUCTION.

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I.

OF THE  
JEWISH SECTS OR PARTIES  
ALLUDED TO  
IN THE GOSPELS.

II.

OF THE  
CHRISTIAN SECTS OR HERESIES  
ALLUDED TO  
IN THE EPISTLES.

B



OF THE  
JEWISH SECTS OR PARTIES  
ALLUDED TO  
IN THE GOSPELS.

---

*The Pharisees.*

THE Pharisees were a sect among the Jews, that had subsisted at least above a century and half before the appearance of our Saviour. They affected the most profound regard for the Law of God, and the Sacred Books ; but for the interpretation of them, and the manner in which they were to be obeyed, they depended chiefly upon traditional accounts. These traditions encumbered religion with a thousand frivolous observances, which drew off the mind from the more important matters of the law ; and made men look upon themselves as holy and acceptable to God, not so much from their moral conduct and observance of divine institutions, as from their conformity to certain modes and punctilioes of mere human invention, introduced among them under pretence of being the Traditions of the Elders\*. Hence their more than ordinary strictness in wearing

the

\* *Ancienta.*

the phylactery, and singularity in enlarging the borders or fringes of their garments \*. Hence their superstition about the Sabbath, as if it had been unlawful on that day to walk in the fields, or to pluck the ears of corn, or to cure the sick, or to aid one's neighbour. Hence, too, their peculiar zeal and pretence to purity, in the demureness with which they fasted ; the exactness with which they payed their tithes ; the ostentation with which they prayed, performing that duty not only aloud, but in the most public turnings of the streets ; the ardor with which they encompassed sea and land to make proselytes or converts to their sect ; their frequent washing, not only of themselves, but of their vestments and utensils ; and their holding at a distance, or separating themselves, not only from Pagans, but from all such Jews as complied not with their peculiarities. To this last circumstance they seem to have owed the name of their sect ; the word Pharisee being derived from a verb in the Hebrew †, which signifies to *divide* or *separate*. This sect, however, not only held the soul to be immortal, but had some slight notions of a resurrection, believing

\* The Phylacteries were little scrolls of parchment bound to their foreheads and wrists, on which were written texts of Scripture, taken from Exod. xiii. 9. 16. and Deut. vi. 8. xi. 18. With regard to their borders and fringes, the reader will find the origin of this distinction in Numb. xv. 38. Deut. xxii. 12.

† פְּרַשׁ, *Pharash*, To divide.

believing that on some occasions the soul might again reanimate a body : whence their conjecture about Christ upon his first appearance, that he was either John the Baptist, or Elias, or one of the old Prophets : and hence, too, notwithstanding the violence with which they had opposed the personal ministry of Jesus, that aptitude they displayed in after-times, beyond some of the other Jewish sects, to fall in with his revelation.

### *The Scribes.*

THE word Scribes, as that denomination occurs in the New Testament, appears to be the title, not of any particular sect, distinguished from all others as to their modes of practice, or belief, but a general term applicable to all those of whatever sect, who made the Law of Moses, and the Prophetical and Sacred Books their peculiar study, so as to become capable of commenting upon them, and thence of publicly instructing the people. This office seems, however, to have been confined to the descendants of Levi, who being very numerous, and not at all times engaged in the immediate service of the temple, had leisure and opportunity enough to qualify themselves for this duty, being unembarrassed with secular employments, and liberally provided for among all the other tribes. It appears indeed from

the frequent mention that is made in the Gospel of the Scribes and Pharisees in conjunction, that the greatest number of Jewish teachers or doctors of the Law \* (for these are expressions equivalent to Scribe), were at that time of the Pharasaical sect. In the Old Testament we meet with the term Scribe in a secular sense, as denoting sometimes a secretary of state, 2 Sam. viii. 17. xx. 25.; sometimes a principal clerk in a court of judicature, Matt. ii. 4, 1 Maccab. v. 42.; and sometimes a commissary or muster-master in the army, 2 Chron. xxvi. 11. 2 Kings xxv. 19.; and although it is probable that a duly qualified man belonging to any of the other tribes might be admitted into any of these employments, yet the superior opportunity that the descendants of Levi enjoyed for all sorts of literary improvements, renders it likely that they were generally preferred, especially in ancient times, even to these departments.

### *The Sadducees.*

THE most ancient sect among the Jews was that of the Sadducees. This name may either be derived from the Hebrew word *sedec*, which signifies *justice*; or from a certain teacher

er

\* So the original word should have been rendered, where in our translation it is improperly expressed by the modern *Lawyers*.

er among the Jews called Sadec. The former seems to have been the origin of the appellation, according to the account of the Sadducees themselves; the latter, according to the account given of them by the Pharisees in the Talmud. If we admit the former derivation, it assigns no fixed date of the antiquity of this sect; if the latter, it ascertains their rise to have been but a few years before that of the Pharisees. But be this as it may, the Sadducees seem to have been originally strict adherents to the Mosaic institution, and to the canonical books, only interpreting them in the most literal sense, and rejecting all other explications. The superior estimation in which they held the Pentateuch, or writings of Moses, to all other compositions in the sacred collection, gave rise in all probability to the report of their adversaries, that they entirely rejected the authority of the rest; and the doubts they entertained about a future state, a doctrine not clearly revealed in the writings of Moses, and about any appearances of angels or spirits among men, since the finishing of the Jewish canon, seem to have at first given a handle to the Pharisees of rendering them suspected of irreligion, which in all probability was afterwards confirmed by men of loose principles sheltering themselves under their name. This, however, is certain, that at the time of our Saviour

viour this sect is reputed to have held doctrines that were thoroughly impious\*. For they are said to have denied the resurrection of the dead, the being of angels, and all existence of the spirits or souls of men departed. It was their opinion, that there is no spiritual Being but God only ; that as to man, this world is his all ; that, at his death, body and soul die together never to live more ; and that, therefore, there is no future reward nor punishment. They acknowledged that God made this world by his power, and governs it by his providence ; and, for the carrying on this government, hath ordained rewards and punishments, but that they do not extend beyond this world. In a word, they seem to have been Epicureans in all respects, excepting only that they allowed that God made the world by his power, and governs it by his providence. At the same time that they held these loose notions, they are said to have had a bigotted attachment to the law of Moses ; and, whether it proceeded from this, or their considering our Saviour as a seditious person, they soon joined with the Pharisees in bringing Christ and his disciples to death : for Caiaphas, who was of this sect, and who was High-priest of the Jews at that time, was he who condemned Jesus to be crucified ;

\* Vide Prideaux.

crucified ; and Ananus the younger \*, another of this sect, put to death St James the brother of our Lord.

### *The Herodians.*

OF the Herodians we meet with nothing among ancient writers, except in the New Testament itself ; where also mention is made of certain Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, and who are described elsewhere in the New Testament as having made an insurrection against the government, and are called murderers or Sicarii †. The learned Calmet takes an opportunity hence of imputing to those called Herodians whatever was done by these Galileans, and thinks they were called Herodians by the other Jews, because Galilee at that time was under the command of Herod, surnamed Antipas. But when we reflect that this insurrection happened long before Christ entered upon his public ministry, even as early as the tenth year of his age, when the insurgents were entirely routed, and the party dispersed, whereas the Herodians are mentioned as still flourishing at the very time when Christ was employed in his mission,

\* Son of Annas the High-priest, mentioned in the Gospel ; who is also called Ananus by Josephus.

† Acts xxi. 38. See a further account of this sect or party, p. 25. under the name of Gaulanites.

sion, we cannot forbear assenting to the judicious conjectures of Dr Prideaux and others, who look upon the Herodians, not as a religious sect, but a political party, who began to become eminent in the days of Herod the Great, as favouring his claims, and those of his patrons the Romans, to the sovereignty of Judea. Some of these, no doubt, might be weak enough to imagine, that Herod was the Messiah, or wicked enough to pretend that they did, in order to serve his cause ; and would be ready to vindicate his conduct, when, the better to pay his court to the Romans, he consecrated temples to some of their false deities. And this party having begun in the time of Herod the Great, may well be supposed to have continued long afterwards in favour and power, by the indulgence of the Herods, and influence of the Romans. That leaven, therefore, of theirs, against which our Saviour warns his hearers, Mark viii. 15. must, in this case, have been, either their false conceptions of the Messiah, or their pliancy and conformity to idol-worship, or both.

OF THE  
CHRISTIAN SECTS OR HERESIES  
ALLUDED TO  
IN THE EPISTLES.

---

WHEN the religion of Jesus began to be spread abroad in the world, it had not only to struggle with avowed adversaries, such as the Jew and the Pagan, by whom its professors were exposed to all manner of external disgrace and calamities ; but it had to support itself in its native purity, dignity, and excellence, against the corrupt doctrines which many of those whom it received into its community had brought with them from the Jewish or Pagan systems ; for under these two denominations were all mankind at that time included ; and both so very corrupt as to be far more capable of imparting infection, than of becoming pure.

I.

OF the Jews who became Christians, there were, besides such as had been of the sect of the Pharisees, &c. others that had imbibed

bibed the particular opinions of the Essenes and the Gaulanites.

### *The Essenes.*

THE Essenes seem to have been of a very remote antiquity. They might take their rise from that dispersion of their nation, which happened after their being carried captive into Babylon. The principal character of this sect was, that they chose retirement, were sober, were industrious ; had all things in common ; paid the highest regard to the moral precepts of the law, but neglected the ceremonial, any farther than what regarded bodily cleanliness, the observation of the Sabbath, and making an annual present to the temple at Jerusalem. They never associated with women, nor admitted them into their retreats ; but gladly embraced every fair opportunity of supporting and enlarging their society, by rearing, breeding, educating, and instructing other men's children, as if they had been their own. By the most sacred vows, though they were in general averse to swearing, or to requiring an oath, they bound all whom they initiated among them, to the observance of piety, justice, fidelity, and modesty ; to conceal the secrets of the fraternity, preserve the books of their instructors, and with great care commemorate the names of the angels. To them, in all

all likelihood, the Apostle alludes, when he inveighs against those who forbid to marry, who command to abstain from meat ; and who, through a voluntary humility, pay worship to angels. But a more particular description of these errors the reader will find below in the account of the 1st Epistle to Timothy.

### *The Gaulanites.*

The Gaulanites were Galileans, who had this name given them from one Judas Theudas, a native of Gaulan, in upper Galilee ; who, in the 10th year of Jesus Christ, which was the last of Augustus, and ten years after the death of Herod the Great, excited his countrymen the Galileans, and many others of the Jews, to take arms and venture upon all extremities, rather than pay tribute to the Romans. The principles he infused into his party were, not only that they were a free nation, and ought to be in subjection to no other, but that they were the elect of God ; that he alone was their Governor ; and that, therefore, they ought not to submit to any ordinance of man. And though he was unsuccessful, insomuch that his party, in their very first attempt, were entirely routed and dispersed ; yet, so deeply had he infused his own enthusiasm into their minds, that they never rested, till in their own destruction they involved the city and temple.

C

To

To this wild and fanatic party seem to be addressed many of those passages in the New Testament, wherein obedience to magistracy is so piously and rationally inculcated.

### *The Nazarenes.*

The Pharisees seem to have composed the chief body of those Christian converts, who in the earlier times were distinguished by the appellation of Nazarenes. These, though they embraced Christianity, yet entered so little into the real spirit and genius of it, that they were still fond of the beggarly elements and carnal ordinances of the Ceremonial Law. To repress this their inordinate superstition, seems to have been the intention of the severity with which the Law is treated in the Apostolic writings, where not only circumcision is execrated against, but we are taught to let no man judge us with regard to meats or drinks, or the observance of holy-days, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath ; which were a shadow of things to come, whereof Christ is the substance \*.

## II.

### *The Gnostics.*

OF the Gentiles who were converted to Christianity, the most dangerous and pernicious

\* See Col. ii. 16. &c.

cious kind were those who were infected with the Egyptian Philosophy : a system, as it was then taught, entirely chimerical and absurd. The Christians of this sort assumed to themselves the name of Gnostics ; a word of Greek derivation, implying a knowledge superior to that of other men. This word does not occur in the New Testament ; but

*The Nicolaitans,*

of whom mention is made in the Apocalypse of St John \*, seem to have been of the Gnostic sect ; as were also

*The Cerinthians ;*

for most of the errors † maintained by Cerinthus, and opposed in the Gospel of St John, may be derived from the same source.

When we say the Gentile converts were chiefly liable to the Gnostic infection, we must not be understood to exclude those of the Jewish race, many of whom were tainted with it, but they seem to have derived it from the Essenes ‡.

*The*

\* See this sect described in a note to *Revelations*.

† See them described at large in the account of St John's *Gospel*.

‡ See the account of the first *Epistle to Timothy*, &c.

### *The Egyptian Philosophy.*

THE maintainers of this philosophy held, that the supreme Being, though infinitely perfect and happy, was not the Creator of the universe, nor the only independent Being: for, according to them, matter too was eternal. The supreme Being, who resides in the immensity of space, which they call *pleroma*, or fulness, produced from himself, say they, other immortal and spiritual natures, stiled by them *Æons* \*, who filled the residence of the Deity with beings similar to themselves. Of these beings some were placed in the higher regions, others in the lower. Those in the lower regions were highest to the place of matter, which originally was an inert and formless mass, till one of them, without any commission from the Deity, and merely to shew his own dexterity, reduced it into form and order, and enlivened some parts of it with animal spirit. The Being who achieved all this, they called the Demiurgus †. But such was the perverseness of matter, that, when brought into form, it was the source of all evil. The supreme

\* *Æon* in Greek, properly signifies the Age of man, but having been employed by philosophers to express the duration of spiritual and invisible beings, the beings themselves were afterwards figuratively called *Æons*, or Durations, &c.

† The operator, artificer, or workman.

supreme Being, therefore, never intended to have given it a form ; but as that had been now done, he, in order to prevent mischief as much as possible, added to the animal spirit of many of the enlivened parts, rational powers. The parts to whom rational powers were thus given, were the original parents of the human race ; the other animated parts were the brute-creation. Unluckily, however, the interposition of the supreme Being was in vain ; for the Demiurgus grew so aspiring, that he seduced men from their allegiance to the supreme Being, and diverted all their devotion to himself.

These are the outlines of this phantastic philosophy. The corruptions flowing from it, when adapted to Christianity, were these : They held that the God of the Jews was the Demiurgus ; that to overthrow and subvert the power and dominion of this Demiurgus, Jesus, one of the celestial Æons, was sent by the supreme Being to enter into the body of the man Christ, in the shape of a dove ; that Christ, by his miracles and sufferings, subverted the kingdom of the Demiurgus ; but when he came to suffer, the Æon Jesus carried along with himself the soul of Christ, and left behind upon the cross, only his body and animal spirit : That the Old Testament ought to be rejected, as having been the means whereby

the Demiurgus supported his influence among men ; that the serpent who deceived Eve, ought to be honoured for endeavouring to rescue men from their slavery to the Demiurgus ; and, finally, that we ought not to marry, or procreate children, because, in so doing, we generate matter, which is the source of all evil ; and that there is no resurrection of the body, because the body is material.

Against this philosophy, and not against true science of any kind, are all those texts of the New Testament levelled, which seem to arraign philosophy. This is that philosophy which is there described as vain, deceitful, traditionary ; formed upon the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. These are the profane and old wives fables ; the endless genealogies, vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called, which we are to reject, and not to give heed to. And of these Sophists, or Gnostics, as they called themselves, the apostles write, when they say,

“ There are certain men crept in unawares,  
“ who were before of old ordained to this con-  
“ demnation ; ungodly men, turning the grace  
“ of our God into lasciviousness, and denying  
“ the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus  
“ Christ,” Jude 4. And again, “ Now if  
“ Christ be preached that he rose from the  
“ dead, how say some among you, that there  
“ is

“is no resurrection of the dead?” 1 Cor. xv. 12.



*To this Introduction may not improperly be subjoined a short Abstract of the Chronology of our Lord's Public Ministry, as proposed by Sir Isaac Newton, and some other critics, who make it to have lasted five passovers: but the more general opinion is, that it only continued three years, and was included in four passovers. Some critics reduce it even to a still shorter period.—See the controversy on this subject between Dr Newton, Bishop of Waterford, and Dr Priestley.*

*It is here copied from Mr Bowyer's Conjectures on the New Testament, &c. 8vo. 1772, a work equally learned and curious. See his Preface, p. 31.*

WILLIAM'S PUBLIC

The fifteenth of Tiberii  
in the year 4742, of the Ju-  
berius's reign began Aug. 1  
A. D. 14.) So soon as will  
the weather became warm be-  
gan to baptize. Luke iii.  
March.]

**A. D. Tib. The First Passover**  
**31. 16-17. Wednesday,** [  
Christ's baptism  
we may suppose  
the 17th of Tib-  
ning till Aug. 19  
to Judea. . . . .

**A. D. Tib.** of Galilee, Mat. iv. 12. A nobleman of Capernaum went to him there, and desired he would come and heal his son. He did not go, but said, "Go, thy son liveth." John iv.

After some time there, he passed through the midst of the people, and dwelt in Capernaum, Luke iv.

**32. 17-18.** The Second Passover, Monday, April 14. He called Peter, Andrew, James and John: preached the Sermon on the Mount, Mat. v.; whither multitudes followed him from Jerusalem, where he had been at the Feast. When the winter was coming on, he went to the feast of Tabernacles in September, Mat. viii. 19. 29. Luke ix. 51. 57.

He went about the villages of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and working many miracles, Mat. ix. Sent forth the twelve, Mat. x. Received a message from John the Baptist. Upbraided the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, because they repented

ciples, goin  
fields, rubbe  
hands, Mat  
διυτιγεράτω,  
“ prime Sab  
second of the  
of the Passov  
Sunday.

He healed a mar  
day, Mat. xii.  
The Pharisees coi  
him, when he w  
Mat. xii. 14.

He spake in a ship  
one of the seeds  
fields, Mat. xiii.  
may infer it was i  
and that the feast  
nacles in a

**A. D. Tib.** Twelve returned, having been abroad a year, and told him of John's being beheaded. He departed privately in a ship to Bethsaida. Fed five thousand in the desert, Mat. xiv. Luke ix. John vi. 4.

34. 19-20. The Fourth Passover, Friday, April 23. John vi. 4. to which he went not up, John vii. 1. Henceforward he was found on the coast of Tyre and Sidon, then by the sea of Galilee, next on the coast of Cesarea Philippi, and lastly at Capernaum, Mat. xv. 21. 29. xvi. 3. xvii. 34. Went privately to the feast of Tabernacles in Autumn, John vii. 2. The Jews thought to stone him, but he escaped, John viii. 59. Went to the feast of Dedication in winter, John x. 22. The Jews seeking to kill him he fled beyond Jordan, John x. 39. 40. Mat. xix. 1. On the death of Lazarus came to Bethany, John xi. 7. 18. Walked no more openly, but retired to Ephraim, a city in the wilderness, till

The

\* See further, concerning the above  
Edition of Bowyer's *Conjectures*, 1782, 4  
with Preface, p. 24, - 32.

A

# K E Y

TO THE

## *NEW TESTAMENT.*

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THE sacred writings, which Christians receive as divinely inspired, are called in general *Scripture*, or *The Scriptures*, a word which literally signifies *Writing*, or *The Writings*. This title often occurs in the New Testament, 2 Tim. iii. 16. Luke iv. 21. and was commonly applied, in the time of our Saviour, to denote the books received by the Jews as the rule of faith: it has since been extended to the writings of the apostles, 2 Pet. iii. 16. and evangelists, as completing the whole of divine revelation; so that the writings of the Old and New Testament are indiscriminately called by Christians, by way of distinction, *Scripture*, or *the Scriptures*.

D

The

The whole collection of these sacred writings is called the **BIBLE**. This word originally signifies *Book*, and is given to the writings of the prophets and apostles by way of eminence. These collectively are called *the Book* or *Bible*, *the Book of Books*, as superior in excellence to all others in the world.

The holy Scriptures are divided into the Old and New Testament. The former contains the books written under the old dispensation of the law of Moses; the latter, those published under the new dispensation of the gospel.

The New Testament (containing the inspired books written after Christ's ascension into heaven) is entitled in Greek, Η ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑ ΟΗΚΗ, a title which was early borrowed by the church from Scripture, (Mat. xxvi. 28. Gal. iii. 17. Heb. viii. 8. ix. 15. 20.), and authorized by St Paul himself, 2 Cor. iii. 14.

This title, according to the passages of Scripture whence it is taken, should be rendered *Covenant*. And in this view, the *new covenant* signifies, "A book containing the terms of the new covenant between God and man." But according to the meaning of the primitive church, which bestowed this title, it is not altogether improperly rendered *New Testament*; as being that wherein the Christian inheritance is sealed to him as a son and heir.

of God, and wherein the death of Christ as a testator, Heb. ix. 16, 17. is related at large, and applied to our benefit. As this title implies, that in the gospel unspeakable gifts are given or bequeathed to us, antecedent to all conditions required of us, the title of Testament may be retained, although that of Covenant is most exact and proper.

The sacred writings of the New Testament are all handed down to us in the Greek language, which was that most generally understood at the time they were written, and are part Historical, part Epistolary, and part Prophetical \*. Of the former are,

### *The Four Gospels.*

THE word *ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ*, *Evangelium*, (*Gospel*) signifies in Greek authors any joyful tidings, and is exactly answerable to our English word *Gospel*, which is derived from the Saxon words God, *good*, and Spel, *speech* or *tidings*. In the New Testament this term is confined to “The glad tidings of the actual “coming of the Messiah,” and is even opposed to the prophecies concerning Christ, Rom. i. 1, 2. So in Mat. xi. 5. our Lord says, “The poor have the gospel preached to ‘them:’ i. e. The coming of the Messiah is preached to the poor. Hence the church gave the

\* Viz. *Revelations*.

follows.



T A B L E  
OF THE  
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With the places when and wh  
according to Mr Micha

Book.	Place.
St MATTHEW.	JUDEA, or near it. In Hebrew, for the Use of the He
St MARK.	ROME. For the Use of the Romans who unde Hebrew.
St LUKE.	ALEXANDRIA. For the Use of the Gentile Christians

Dr Mill and Dr Lardner concur for the most part in these dates, &c. only the latter thinks St Matthew's Gospel was writ in Greek about A. D. 64; that St Mark's was also penned the same year; and that St Luke's Gospel and Acts of the Apostles were first published in Greece. Dr Mill thinks St John's Gospel was written so late as the year 97, not long before his death.

It is the general opinion of these, and almost all other critics, that the first three Evangelists had not seen each other's Gospels when they composed their own, except St Mark, who is allowed to have abridged that of St Matthew: But an ingenious writer\* has lately compared the several Gospels together in the original language, and thinks he hath discovered strong internal proofs of the contrary: he has therefore offered a new arrangement, according to the following table.

## A

\* Dr Owen. See his Observations on the Four Gospels, 8vo. 1764.

## A

## S C H E M E

Of the Times, Places, and Occasions of writing  
the Gospels, according to Dr Owen.

Gospels.	Places.	A. D.
St MATTHEW's.	JERUSALEM.	about 38*
	For the Use of the Jewish Converts.	
St LUKE's.	CORINTH.	about 53
	For the Use of the Gentile Converts.	
St MARK's.	ROME.	about 63
	For the Use of Christians at large.	
St JOHN's.	EPHESUS.	about 69
	To confute the Cerinthian and other Heresies.	

This ingenious writer thinks St Matthew wrote his Gospel for the use of the churches at Palestine, then composed of Jewish converts, and adapted to the condition of the times, and nature of their circumstances.

“ When the Gentiles were admitted into the Christian church, St Luke, as the exigence of their state required, strengthened their faith by another Gospel, accommodated to their special use.

“ And

\* This, and the date of St Luke's Gospel, are controverted in the following pages; however, the general arrangement may be allowed to stand here.

“ And when the invidious distinction between Jew and Gentile had well nigh ceased, St Mark, wisely rejecting the many peculiarities of these two Gospels, compacted a third out of their most important contents, for the benefit and instruction of Christians at large.

“ And afterwards, when the church was infested by heretics, St John undertook to confute their errors from the life and conversation of Christ, which produced the last of these Gospels, and afforded the author an opportunity of relating several remarkable things which had been omitted by his predecessors.”

“ These four Gospels, he thinks, form one complete system of divinity ; and if we read them in the order they are here placed in, we shall find them improving on one another, and yet all conspiring to one end, to a perfect representation of revealed religion. Each of the authors consulted the writings of his predecessors ; and, either by the additions of facts, explanation of terms, or confirmation of doctrines, contributed something to the common stock, and the general instruction of Christians. They likewise quoted each other’s words, and thereby recommended each other’s histories ; by which means they became not only mutual vouchers for the truth of these genuine Gospels, but at the same time joint opposers of all those spurious ones that were impiously

... in churches. A  
he wrote his own, it was  
world with the knowledge,  
perhaps testimony of all th  
Thus was the whole evange  
closed, and the evangelical  
upon the firmest ground, and  
nerable authority.”

OF THE  
G O S P E L  
ACCORDING TO  
S T M A T T H E W.

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THIS Gospel was written before the other three. The author of it was an eye-witness of most of the facts he relates, having been early called to the apostolic office by Christ himself. See Matt. ix. 9. Besides the name of Matthew, he had also that of Levi, being the son of Alpheus ; but not of that Alpheus or Cleophas, who was the father of James, &c. Matt. x. 3. He was originally by profession a publican, or collector of the Roman taxes. His office consisted in gathering the customs of such commodities as came by the sea of Galilee, and in receiving tribute from such passengers as went by water. This lucrative post he cheerfully quitted for the sake of Christ, to whom he became a faithful attendant, and eye-witness of all his miracles.

In what year St Matthew wrote his Gospel is not agreed by ancient writers ; some dating it in the year of Christ 41, others in 49, and others

others between the years 61 and 64. This last account is gathered from Irenæus, and is what the most judicious modern critics \* are inclined to prefer ; not only as Irenæus was the most ancient of those who have given the circumstance of time, but for other reasons. The Hebrews suffered about that time a heavy persecution, which almost drove them to apostacy, and obliged St Paul to write his Epistle to them. In these circumstances nothing could be of more expediency and use to them, than a history of the miracles and resurrection of Christ. It is most probable, therefore, that both his Gospel and the Epistle to the Hebrews were written with the same view, to preserve the Christians of Judea in the faith.

Again, this Gospel contains several plain predictions of the miseries and desolation of Jerusalem, and of the overthrow of the temple, &c. besides many other figurative intimations of the same thing, which could not safely be published to all the world in writing, till towards the conclusion of the Jewish state.

An ingenious writer † has lately proposed a much earlier date of St Matthew's Gospel. He indeed thinks that it was writ in a time of persecution

\* Michaelis is for the year 61. Lardner is for 64. See also Basnage, &c.

† Dr Owen. See his Observations on the Four Gospels; 8vo. p. 22.

persecution, for the use of the Jews ; but then he supposes it was in that first persecution which raged in Palestine after the death of the martyr Stephen, about the year of Christ 38, in the second year of the emperor Caligula.

There is however a capital objection to this very early date ; and that is, the great clearness with which the comprehensive design of the Christian dispensation, as extending to the whole Gentile world, is unfolded in this Gospel. Whereas it is well known and allowed by all, that for a while our Lord's disciples laboured under Jewish prejudices, and that they did not fully understand all his discourses\* at the time they were spoken. They could not clearly discern the extensive design of the gospel scheme, till after St Peter had been at the house of Cornelius, and there received Gentile converts into the church without circumcision†, nor indeed till after the gospel had been preached abroad in foreign countries by St Paul and other apostles.

Now, if we turn to St Matthew's Gospel, we every where find the enlarged views of his divine Master represented in too clear a manner to admit a doubt that the writer was ignorant

\* Vide John xvi. 12.—14. and other passages.

† Acts, chap. x. This event is placed by Chronologists about the year 39.

derstood the calling of the Gentiles  
rejection of the Jews, may be inferred  
several passages. Chap. viii. 10. 12. :  
46. xxii. 1. 14. He had also a dist-  
prehension of the extent of our Lord's  
dom and the progress of his doctrine, &  
recorded those parables in chap. xiii.  
is probable he had some knowledge of  
gospel having been preached out of  
when he put down that declaration con-  
the woman in chap. xxvi. 13.

There is also an expression used  
twice, intimating that some considerab-  
of time had elapsed between the ev-  
the time when this Gospel was written  
chap. xxvii. 8. and chap. xxviii. 15.\*

Whoever weighs all these circum-

Christians of Palestine about the year 61, than in the more early one in 38. For it is the unanimous opinion of antiquity, that

“ St Matthew wrote his Gospel for the service of the Jews in Palestine \*, with a view to confirm those who believed, and to convert, if possible, those who believed not.” This opinion is supported by several passages of his Gospel. Thus the evangelist begins with the genealogy of Christ from Abraham, which, agreeably to the Jewish custom, he gives according to the **LEGAL** descent by Joseph his supposed father; deducing it down from Abraham through David, to shew his title to the kingdom of Israel. Thus also he refers often to Jewish customs; relates the most of our Saviour’s discourses against Jewish errors and superstitions, chap. xxiii. 1,—33.; quotes the greatest number of passages from the Jewish Scriptures; answers the most considerable Jewish objections; and frequently makes use of the terms and phrases of Jewish theology.

That this evangelist wrote in a time of persecution, appears from the many useful lessons which he gives to comfort and support the suffering Christians, and to moderate, win over, or at least deter the persecuting Jews.

With

\* Origen, apud Euseb. L. vi. c. 25. Hieron. & Theophylact in Mat.—Vide Dr Owen, *passim*.

With regard to the Christians, he informs them that their afflictions were no more than what they had been taught to expect, and had engaged to bear, when they embraced the gospel, chap. x. 21, 22. 34,—36. xvi. 24.: That their sufferings were useful to them as trials of their faith, chap. v. 11. xxiv. 9,—13.: That a cowardly desertion of the gospel would only expose them to greater calamities, and cut them off from the hopes of heaven, chap. x. 28. 32, 33. 39.: That they might lawfully use means of preservation, when consistent with innocence, chap. x. 16, 17. 23.: That the observance of the rules of the gospel was an excellent means to soften the fury of their enemies, chap. v. 39. vii. 12. 24,—27. v. 13, —20.: And that it was better to suffer martyrdom, than by any base compliance to incur God's displeasure, chap. xvi. 25,—27. x. 28.

On the other hand, with regard to the unmerciful Jews, he tries to soften their prejudices, and engage them in the practice of meekness and charity, chap. ix. 13. To this end he inculcates the amiableness of a compassionate and benevolent disposition, chap. v. 3,—48. xviii. 23,—35.; its advantages here, and rewards hereafter, chap. v. 5. 7. 9. x. 40, —42. xviii. 23,—35. v. 21,—26. xxv. 31,—46. He reminds them of the judgments inflicted on their fathers for the cruel treatment of

of the prophets, and that they might expect worse if they persisted in the ways of cruelty, chap. xxiii. 27,—39. x. 14, 15.; for that God, though long-suffering, would at last vindicate his elect, and punish their oppressors with a general destruction, chap. xxiv. 1. &c.

St Matthew is said by ancient writers to have written his Gospel originally in Hebrew or Syriac, out of which it was early translated, either by himself, or some other apostolic writer, into Greek, as being the more universal language. However, some judicious critics among the moderns, by examining the internal structure of the Greek text, have found reason to believe that the ancients were mistaken in this respect, and that the Greek copy is not a version, but the original \*.

After all, whether the present Gospel was the original or the translation, it is agreed on all hands to be of divine authority, being published in the apostolic age, universally received by the Christian church as authentic, and many passages of it being (as a learned writer has lately shewn †) incorporated into the Gospels

\* See Lardner, Jortin, Doddridge, Wetstein, Basnage, &c. However, the contrary opinion is maintained with no slight arguments by Michaelis.

† See Dr Owen's Observations on the Four Gospels. By way of specimen, compare Mark iv. 1,—9. with Matt. xiii. 1,—9.; and Mark xiv. 26,—46. with Matt. xxvi. 30,—50.

again, compare Luke iii. 4,—6. with Matt. i.  
to iii. 7,—9. with Matt. iii. 7,—10. Luke iii  
in Matt. iii. 11, 12. Luke xii. 22,—31. with  
—33. Luke vii. 20. 22,—28. with Matt. xi. 3.—

OF THE  
**G O S P E L**  
ACCORDING TO  
**S T M A R K**

THIS Gospel is agreed to have been written by that Mark whom St Peter affectionately calls his son, i. e. his worthy disciple, 1 Pet. v. 13. and whom the ancients affirm to have been the familiar companion of that apostle. He is also believed to have been the John sur-named Mark \*, to whose mother's house St Peter retired when released by the angel out of prison, Acts xii. 12. and who is the same John that accompanied St Paul and Barnabas in their travels, Acts xii. 25. Mark was only his surname, which he had probably assumed in compliance with the Jewish custom, while he travelled among the heathens, to whom his Hebrew name of John would have appeared too foreign.

His mother dwelt at Jerusalem, and the Christians assembled at her house, Acts iii. 12, he was cousin to Barnabas, Col. iv. 10. and attended him and St Paul in their first travels

## E 9 among

\* See Lardner, Michaelis, &c.

among the Gentiles, Acts xii. 25. but he soon separated from them, Acts xiii. 13. which occasioned a division between these two apostles, when Barnabas took him along with him another journey, chap. xv. 36,—40. However, when St Mark lived at Rome about the time of St Paul's imprisonment, that apostle had so good an opinion of him, that he reckons him among his fellow-labourers, Philem. 24. and had thoughts of sending him to Colosse, Col. iv. 10.

St Mark, even humanly speaking, was a very credible witness of the life of Christ. He was strictly speaking an evangelist, i. e. a preacher sent by the apostles to Jews and Gentiles, without being confined to any particular church. What Timothy was to St Paul, Mark was to St Peter and Barnabas, and at last he bore the same relation to St Paul himself. It was usual for such evangelists to have extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, 1 Tim. iv. 14. and 2 Tim. i. 6. Hence we have just reason to believe that St Mark wrote by inspiration: and, as the primitive church has transmitted to us his Gospel, as a book of divine authority, without ever entertaining the least doubts of his inspiration, we have no reason to consider it as a mere human composition.

St Mark is universally allowed to have written

ten after St Matthew\*, and a learned writer † thinks, he also wrote after St Luke. The Gospels of these two evangelists were written, that of St Matthew with particular reference to the Jews, that of St Luke with a view to the Gentiles; the Gospel of St Mark (according to this supposition) was composed last of the three, in a still more simple form, and for more general use. It was written at the request, and for the use of the Christian church at Rome, which was at that time the grand metropolis and common centre of all civilized nations. St Mark's Gospel is therefore a simple and compendious narrative, divested of almost all peculiarities, and accommodated to the use of Christians in general.

As the other two evangelists had been so full in their accounts of our Saviour's birth and infancy, this will account for St Mark's passing over that period of the history, and confining his narrative to the time of our Lord's public mission. And as this had been so well related already, he had little more to do than to abridge the two former Gospels, varying some

\* M. Michaelis thinks that St Mark had St Matthew's Gospel chiefly before him, and wrote principally with a design of publishing in a more known language (sc. the Greek) than which St Matthew had written in Hebrew.

† Dr Owen. See his Observations on the Four Gospels, mentioned above in the Introduction.

us; so that the most familiar emperor Augustus (which are commonly either in Greek, or Greek. We are not therefore St Mark, a foreigner, wrote his language, for the use of the in general.

Ishem ; the account of Jesus' birth ; the sermon on the mount, which exposes the false morality of the Pharisees, to which the Gentiles were strangers ; and in general the quotations of certain prophecies of the Old Testament. On the other hand, he adds some things for the sake of the Gentiles, to enable them to understand the History of Christ. Thus, in Chap. vii. 2. he explains what was the meaning of *defiled* or *unclean* among the Jews ; and in ver. 3, 4. instructs his readers in the Jewish customs, which was unnecessary in St Matthew. In chap. xv. 21. having mentioned Simon the Cyrenian, he adds, that he was "the father of Alexander and Rufus," because both these persons resided at Rome, and were known to the Roman Christians, Rom. xvi. 13. And perhaps the young man mentioned in ch. xiv. 51, 52. was a Roman, whose curiosity might lead him to know the cause of the tumult, and being a stranger might be the sooner suspected, and therefore apprehended. He had perhaps often told the story at Rome ; and the evangelist thought proper to confirm it. In this light it makes a good argument. All internal marks of this sort confirm the report of the ancients, that St Mark wrote his Gospel chiefly for the use of the Romans.

The time when he wrote it appears\* to have been

\* See Dr Owen's Observations, p. 76,—80. Mill, &c.

ligently ('Αρείας), and had drawn it from the fountain-head ("Αιών). And it is no more objection to the divinity of his book, that he wrote from the information of others, than it is to the inspiration of Moses, that he took his first book from ancient records, and sometimes refers to other books, Numb. xxi. 27. ; and therefore we may well receive the universal testimony of the Christian church, that St Luke, under the direction of the Holy Ghost, committed to writing those particulars which he had received from infallible witnesses.

It has been the common opinion, that St Luke wrote later than St Matthew and St Mark ; but the ingenious writer so often quoted\* thinks that St Mark wrote last of the three ; and this, as we have seen, has great appearance of reason †.

St Jerom affirms, that St Luke penned his Gospel on the borders of Achaia and Boeotia, which should seem to be at the time when he was attending St Paul in his travels through Greece ; under whose care and inspection he probably

\* Dr Owen. See his Observations on the Gospels. He fixes the date of St Luke's Gospel in A. D. 53. ; if so, it must have been written before St Matthew's (see above, p. 46.) ; but as the contrary seems demonstrable from the passages of St Matthew copied by St Luke (see below), we must assign a later date to St Luke's Gospel, unless we date St Matthew's Gospel in 41 or 49.

† P. 60.

probably wrote it. It is agreed to be this evangelist whom that apostle expressly stiles, "the brother whose praise is in the Gospel," 2 Cor. viii. 18. And that St Luke wrote agreeably at least to St Paul's sense, will be evident to any one that compares Luke xxii. 19, 20. with 1 Cor. xi. 23,—25. where the apostle and evangelist have both used the very same words in Greek to describe the institution of the Lord's supper: this coincidence shews the agreement of their sentiments, whichever of them is supposed to have written first.

St Matthew's Gospel being intended chiefly for the Jews, it was highly expedient that some inspired apostolical person should write such a history of our Saviour's life, as might satisfy the enquiries, and be adapted to the situation of the Gentile converts. This accordingly appears to have been the peculiar view of St Luke in his Gospel: for, writing to those who were far remote from the scene of action, and ignorant of Jewish affairs, it was requisite for him to descend to many particulars, and touch on many points which would have been unnecessary when writing to the Jews. Hence he begins his history so much farther back than the rest, and is so careful in specifying times and places. Hence he gives the genealogy of Christ, according to his

his natural descent from the Virgin Mary and carries it up to Adam ; shewing he v that seed of the woman, who was promised the redemption of the whole world.

With regard to the general construction St Luke's Gospel, it seems to be formed ne ly on the same plan with that of St Matthe whose very words are sometimes copied Indeed, as the Gentile converts suffered same things from their countrymen that Jewish Christians did from the Jews, it v necessary St Luke should adopt much the sa points of instruction, both to support the p persecuted Christians †, and to soften and c ert their malicious adversaries, of whom Jews residing in the several countries were s the chief ||. But as the rage and envy of Jews proceeded now from another cause ( they persecuted the Gentile Christians for li ing claim to the privileges of the gospel), shall accordingly find St Luke's narrative culiarly adapted to remove their prejudic

\* By interposing an easy parenthesis, the pedigree in Luke is naturally connected with the family of Mary. “ Jesus began to be, or was, when he began *bis minis* “ about thirty years of age ; being, (as was supposed, the “ of Joseph, but) *in reality the son of Heli, who was the ther of Mary.*” KIDDER.

† See instances referred to above, in p. 52. ; and ot may be seen in Dr Owen.

‡ Chap. vi. 20.—23. xii. 4,—12. 31, &c. xviii. 28,—

§ Ch. vi. 24,—26. x. 12. xiii. 1,—5. xix. 14,—44.

and obviate their objections ; to soften and enlarge their minds, and deter them from their malicious proceedings \*.

St Luke wrote in Greek, and (as appears from the beginning both of his Gospel and *Acts of the Apostles*) at the request of a Christian of distinction, whose name was Theophilus. He calls him *aḡn̄os*, or *excellent*, as we address certain persons with the title of *excellency*. The same title in Greek is given in the *Acts* to the Roman governor †, and was equivalent to the Latin *optimus*, or *optimas* which the Romans addressed to their principal senators of the most ancient families. A great critic ‡ thinks this was some nobleman who dwelt in Upper Egypt, and that St Luke's Gospel was written about A. D. 63. in that country, near Thebes ; which he supposes St Jerom mistook for Thebes in Bœotia. He observes, that the Syriac subscriptions represent this Gospel to have been published at Alexandria in Egypt, and he imagines many things in it were particularly expressed with a view to confute the falsehoods of the Egyptian Gospel ; an erroneous narrative, whence Mahomet is believed to have extracted many of those

\* Vide chap. iv. 25,—27. xx. 9,—16. xv. 11,—32. xviii. 7, 8. xiii. 1,—5. xxi. 5, &c. xiii. 28,—30. xiv. 16,—24.

† Ch. xxiii. 26. xxiv. 3. xxvi. 5.

‡ M. Michaelis. See his *Lectures on the New Testament*.

that St Luke's Gospel was written a  
year 61, if that be admitted to have  
date of St Matthew's Gospel.

OF THE  
G O S P E L  
ACCORDING TO  
S T J O H N.

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THIS Gospel is universally agreed to have been written after all the rest, with a view of completing whatever was deficient in them all. This evangelist, independent of his divine inspiration, must be allowed to have had a most perfect knowledge of the facts he relates; and as he undoubtedly examined all the other gospels before he wrote, he is an authentic witness to their veracity. He was, according to the testimony of the ancients, of our Saviour's near kindred. Before he became acquainted with our Lord, he was a disciple of John the Baptist, and probably one of those two whom he sent to Christ, John i. 37,—42. Our Saviour honoured him with the most intimate confidence, and loved him beyond his other disciples. He, and Peter, and James, were (exclusive of the rest) witnesses of the raising Jairus's daughter, of Christ's transfiguration, and of his agony in the garden. He was the only

only apostle who stood under the cross when Christ was crucified. So that he was better qualified than any other to describe the miracles and history of Jesus Christ. A very discerning writer\* thinks that St John, in the life-time of his blessed Master, wrote down some of the heads of his discourses : At least that his stile perfectly resembles that of those who relate the discourses of another from short heads taken down while they were spoken.

But we are to consider this Gospel not only as an historical narrative, but also as a controversial treatise designed to confute various heresies. For no sooner was the Christian church established, but its doctrines were obscured, debased, and corrupted by errors and heresies of various kinds. The first heretics assumed the name of Gnostics, i. e. "knowing ones," pretending to superior light and knowledge. They were afterwards followed by the Nicolaitans, whose false tenets were propagated by Ebion and Cerinthus. These heresies prevailed most in Asia. Wherefore the Asiatic bishops desired St John to draw up a refutation of them ; and he, in compliance with their request, composed his Gospel with a view to put those heretics "to shame, and to shew that "there is one God, who by 'Christ' his word "made all things, and that the Creator and  
" Father

\* Michaelis. See his Lectures on the New Testament.

“ Father of our Lord were not, as they pretended, distinct beings \*,” &c. Wherefore he does not relate the birth and parentage of Christ, or even those facts of which he, Peter, and James, were eye-witnesses, exclusive of the other apostles ; but he chiefly collects such discourses and miracles as confirm the doctrines laid down in the first chapter, which were counter-positions to those of Cerinthus and other heretics, who maintained the grossest errors concerning Christ.

Cerinthus is said to have taught, 1. That the most high God was entirely unknown before the appearance of Christ, and dwelt in a remote heaven called *Pleroma*, with the chief Spirits or *Æons* †. 2. That this supreme God first generated an only begotten Son, who again begat the Word, which was inferior to the first-born. 3. That Christ was a still lower *Æon*, though far superior to some others. 4. That there were two high *Æons* distinct from Christ ; one called *Life*, and the other *Light*. 5. That from the *Æons* again proceeded inferior orders of spirits ; and particularly one *Demiurgus*, who created this visible world out of eternal matter. 6. That this Demiurgus was ignorant of the supreme God, and much lower than the *Æons*, which were

\* Irenæus, contra Hæres. L. iii. c. 2.

† See the Introduction

real son of Joseph and  
Æon Christ descended in  
of a dove, when he was b  
him the unknown Father,  
to work miracles. 10. I  
entered John the Baptist in  
and therefore that John w  
to be preferred to Christ  
Jesus had propagated the l  
and came to suffer, Christ  
to the uppermost heaven.  
Christ should reign on earth  
and his disciples enjoy all  
Some of the Cerinthian sec  
resurrection of the dead, an  
maintained that Jesus Chris  
risen.

The third is a conclusion or appendix, giving an account of the person of the writer, and of the view he had in writing, chap. xx. 30. *to the end.*

In what year this Gospel was written is not agreed among the ancients. It should seem to have been before the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in the year of our Lord 70, for St John speaks of that city as still subsisting: "There is at Jerusalem by the sheep-market a pool," &c. chap. v. 2. On the other hand it appears, from the Gospel itself, to have been written after the death of St Peter, which is generally placed in the year 68. For the other evangelists, when they relate the cutting off the high priest's servant's ear, conceal the name of Peter, lest the Jews should have a legal pretence to prosecute him, and deliver him to the Romans to be capitally punished. Whereas St John mentions him expressly by name, chap. xviii. 10. Nor could St John probably have interpreted the words of Christ, "Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee," chap. xxi. 18. concerning the manner of St Peter's death, if it had been written before the crucifixion of that apostle; for before that time the words were ambiguous. This limits the writings of this Gospel to the year 69, a year expressly specified by an ancient writer. Others give  
the

..... on the firmest ground  
venerable authority.

OF THE  
A C T S  
OF THE  
A P O S T L E S.

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**T**HIS forms a central or intermediate book to connect the Gospels and the Epistles. It is an useful postscript to the former, and a proper introduction to the latter.

This divine history is evidently a second part or continuation of St Luke's Gospel, as appears from the very beginning of it ; and that both were written by the same evangelist, is attested by the most ancient Christian writers. The subscriptions at the end of some Greek MSS. and of the copies of the Syriac version, testify that St Luke wrote the Acts at Alexandria in Egypt.

As the narrative reaches down to the year of Christ 63, the Acts cannot have been written earlier than that year ; and that they were not written much later, may be inferred from the subject being continued no farther, which otherwise it would probably have been : at least St Luke would have been apt to have given the issue of St Paul's imprisonment at Rome,

Rome, as what the Christian reader would have been curious to have known.

Considered as a mere human witness, St Luke was better able than others to draw up an authentic history of the apostles, as he had accompanied St Paul in so many of his journeys. As he was a physician by profession, he was able to form a sound judgment of the miracles St Paul wrought upon the diseased, and to make a credible report of them. But he seems not to have had the gift of healing himself; for in chap. xxvii. 8, 9. St Paul, and not he, healed the sick. His accounts are generally so full and circumstantial, that the reader is perfectly enabled to examine the facts himself, and to judge whether they were attended with any deception or not.

St Luke appears not to have intended to write a complete ecclesiastical history of the whole Christian church during the first thirty years after Christ's ascension. For he almost wholly omits what passed among the Jews after the conversion of Paul, though the labours and sufferings of the other apostles could not but have afforded interesting materials.

If we examine the contents of this book, we may observe two ends pursued in it.

1st, To give an authentic relation of the effusion of the Holy Ghost, and the first miracles by which the truth of the Christian religion

religion was established. An authentic account of this was indispensably necessary, since Christ had so often promised the Holy Ghost to his disciples ; and if a heathen were to receive this Gospel, he would naturally enquire how it had been first promulgated at Jerusalem.

2d, To impart those accounts which evince the claim of the Gentiles to the church of Christ : a point particularly contested by the Jews about the time of St Luke's writing the Acts. St Paul was at that very time a prisoner at Rome, upon the accusation of the Jews, who became his enemies for having admitted the Gentiles into the church.

Hence it is, that St Luke relates, chap. viii. the conversion of the Samaritans, and, chap. x. xi. the history of Cornelius, who, though he was not of the circumcision, had, in consequence of a divine command, been instructed in the gospel by St Peter himself, to whom St Paul's opponents appealed, Gal. ii. 6,—21. For the same reason he relates, chap. xv. what was decreed by the first council at Jerusalem concerning the Levitical law ; and treats most fully of the conversion of St Paul, and of his mission and transactions among the Gentiles.

The Acts of the Apostles may very properly be divided into seven parts, viz.

I. The account of the first Pentecost after  
G Christ's

IV. The first circuit of St Barnabas  
St Paul among the Gentiles. Chap.

V. The embassy to Rome, and the  
council at Jerusalem, wherein the Jews  
titles were admitted to an equality. ¶

VI. The second circuit of St Paul  
xvi. xix.

VII. St Paul's third journey to  
Chap. xix. 21,—28.

OF THE  
E P I S T L E S.

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THE sum and substance of the Christian religion is contained in the history of the life and death, the doctrines and discourses, of our Lord in the Four Gospels. The epistolary writings of the apostles were occasional, being intended to confirm the several churches to whom they are addressed, in the same rules of gospel-faith and practice as they had been before instructed in, and accommodated to the disputes and controversies, errors and false notions that prevailed among them.

The general method observable in these apostolic letters is, First, to discuss the particular point debated in the church, or among the persons to whom they are addressed, and which was the occasion of their being written; and, in the next place, to give such exhortations to every Christian duty and virtue, as would be at all times, and in every church, of necessary and absolute importance; paying a particular regard to those virtues which the disputes that occasioned the epistle might tempt them to neglect. Now the former part of these epistolary writings cannot be rightly understood,

derstood, but by attending carefully to the state of the question there determined. Therefore the errors and vain disputes concerning faith and works, justification and sanctification, election and reprobation, &c. which have so long vexed and distracted the minds of Christians, have all arisen from one grand mistake of applying to themselves or other particular persons now, certain phrases or passages which plainly referred to the then state and condition, not of particular persons, but of whole churches, whether Jewish or Gentile, of those times. Perplexed and puzzled with these knotty points, many well-meaning Christians have been drawn aside from paying a due regard to those moral and weighty exhortations which are most easy to be understood, and of infinite obligation to be put in practice \*.

Of the Epistles, fourteen are by St Paul, which are not placed according to the order of time in which they were written, but according to the precedent or supposed rank of the churches and persons to whom they are addressed. It will be proper, therefore, to exhibit here their chronological order, according to two eminent critics.

THE

\* Vide Pyke.

THE  
CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Of the Epistles, &c. according to Mr Michaelis  
and some others.

Epistle to, or by.	Places where written.	A. D.
1 Peter.	Jerusalem.	49
Galatians.	Thessalonica.	51
1 Thessalonians.	Corinth.	52
2 Thessalonians.	Corinth.	52
1 Corinthians.	Ephesus.	57
2 Corinthians.	Macedonia.	58
1 Timothy.	—	58
Romans.	Corinth.	end of 58
James.	Uncertain.	61
Philemon.		
Colossians.	Rome.	62
Ephesians.		
Philippians.		
Hebrews.	Rome.	68
Titus.	Nicopolis.	Uncertain.
2 Peter.	Uncertain.	67
Jude.	Uncertain.	Uncertain.
2 Timothy.	Rome.	67
3 Epistles of John.	Uncertain.	70
Revelations.	Patmos.	54 56

S'T PAUL's EPISTI

With the Places where, and Times  
ten, according to Dr Lard

Epistles.	Places.
1 Thessalonians.	Corinth.
2 Thessalonians.	Corinth.
Galatians.	{ Corinth, or Ephesus,
2 Corinthians.	Ephesus.
1 Timothy.	Macedonia.
Titus.	{ Macedonia. } or near it.
2 Corinthians.	Macedonia.
Romans.	Corinth.
Ephesians.	Rome.



## T A B L E

Of the Catholic Epistles and the Revelation,  
according to Dr Lardner.

Epistle.	Place.	A. D.
James.	Judea.	61 or beg. of 62
The two Epistles of Peter.	Rome.	64
1 John.	Ephesus.	about 80
2d and 3d of John.	Ephesus.	between 80 and 90
Jude.	Unknown.	64 or 65
Revelation.	Patmos or Ephesus.	95 or 96

OF

OF THE  
E P I S T L E  
TO THE  
R O M A N S.

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THIS celebrated epistle was written by St Paul from Corinth, when he was setting out for Jerusalem with the supplies which had been collected in Macedonia, and at Corinth ; that is, according to some critics \*, in the beginning, or, according to others, towards the end of the year 58, which was the 4th of the emperor Nero.

The Christian church at Rome appears not to have been planted by any apostle ; wherefore St Paul, lest it should be corrupted by the Jews who then swarmed in Rome, and of whom many were converted to Christianity, sends them an abstract of the principal truths of the gospel, and endeavours to guard them against those erroneous notions, which the Jews had of justification, and of the election of their own nation.

Now

\* So Dr Lardner, who thinks St Paul came to Corinth in November, A. D. 57. ; and wrote this epistle in February following. The other opinion is that of Michaelis. Vide *Rom. xv. 25,--27.*

Now the Jews assigned three grounds for justification ; First, “ The extraordinary piety and merits of their ancestors, and the covenant made by God with these holy men.” They thought God could not hate the children of such meritorious parents : and as he had made a covenant with the Patriarchs to bless their posterity, he was obliged thereby to pardon their sins. Secondly, “ A perfect knowledge and diligent study of the law of Moses.” They made this a plea for the remission of all their sins and vices. Thirdly, “ The works of the Levitical law,” which were to expiate sin, especially circumcision and sacrifices. Hence, they inferred that the Gentiles must receive the whole law of Moses in order to be justified and saved.

The Jews doctrine concerning election was, “ That as God had promised to Abraham to bless his seed, to give him not only spiritual blessing, but also the land of Canaan, to suffer him to dwell there in prosperity, and to consider him as his church upon earth :” That therefore this blessing extended to their whole nation, and that God was bound to fulfil these promises to them, whether they were righteous or wicked, faithful or unbelieving. They even believed that a prophet ought not to pronounce against their nation the prophecies with which he was inspired ; but was rather to beg of

ture condemns even in the Jews. Ch. iii. 1, —19.

OBJECTION IV. "They had the Levitical law and sacrifices." ANSWER. From hence is no remission, but only the knowledge of sin. Ch. iii. 20.

5. From all this St Paul concludes, that Jews and Gentiles may be justified by the same means, namely, without the Levitical law, through faith in Christ; and in opposition to the imaginary advantages of the Jews, he states the declaration of Zechariah, that God is the God as well of the Gentiles as the Jews. Ch. iii. 21.

6. As the whole blessing was promised to the faithful descendants of Abraham, whom both Scripture and the Jews call his children, he proves his former assertion from the example of Abraham, who was an idolater before his call, but was declared just by God, on account of his faith, long before his circumcision. Hence he takes occasion to explain the nature and fruits of faith. Chap. iv. 1. v. 11.

7. He goes on to prove from God's justice that the Jews had no advantages over the Gentiles, with respect to justification. Both Jews and Gentiles had forfeited life and immortality, by the means of one common father of their race, whom they themselves had not chosen. Now as God was willing to restore immortality

lity by a new spiritual head of a covenant, viz. Christ, it was just that both Jews and Gentiles should share in this new representative of the whole race, ch. v. 12. *to the end.*—Ch. v. 15, 16. amount to this negative question, “ Is it not fitting that the free gift should extend as far as the offence ?”

8. He shews that the doctrine of justification, as stated by him, lays us under the strongest obligations of holiness. Ch. vi. 1. *to the end.*

9. He shews that the law of Moses no longer concerns us at all ; for our justification arises from our appearing in God’s sight, as if actually dead with Christ, on account of our sins ; but the law of Moses was not given to the dead. On this occasion he proves at large, that the eternal power of God over us is not affected by this ; and, that whilst we are under the law of Moses, we perpetually become subject to death, even by sins of inadvertency. Ch. vii. 1. *to the end.*

10. Hence he concludes, that all those, and those only, who are united with Christ, and for the sake of his union do not live according to the flesh, are free from all condemnation of the law, and have an undoubted share in eternal life. Ch. viii. 1,—17.

11. Having described their blessedness, he  
is

is aware that the Jews, who expected a temporal happiness, would object to him, that Christians notwithstanding endure much suffering in this world. He answers this objection at large. Ch. viii. 18. *to the end.*

12. He shews that God is not the less true and faithful, because he doth not justify, but rather rejects and punishes those Jews who would not believe the Messiah. Ch. ix. x. xi. In discussing this point we may observe the cautious manner in which, on account of the Jewish prejudices, he introduces it, ch. ix. 1, —5. as well as in the discussion itself.

He shews that the promises of God were never made to all the posterity of Abraham; and that God always reserved to himself the power of chusing those sons of Abraham, whom, for Abraham's sake, he intended to bless, and of punishing the wicked sons of Abraham; and that, with respect to temporal happiness or misery, he was not even determined in his choice by their works. Thus he rejected Ishmael, Esau, the Israelites in the desert in the time of Moses, and the greater part of that people in the time of Isaiah, making them a sacrifice to his justice. Ch. ix. 6,—29.

He then proceeds to shew that God had reason to reject most of the Jews then living, because

because they would not believe in the Messiah, though the gospel had been preached to them plainly enough, ch. ix. 30.—x. *to the end*. However, that God had not rejected all his people, but was still fulfilling his promise upon many thousand natural descendants of Abraham, who believed in the Messiah ; and would, in a future period, fulfil them upon more ; for that all Israel would be converted, ch. xi. 1,—32. And he concludes with admiring the wise counsels of God, ver. 33. *to the end*.

13. From the doctrine hitherto laid down, and particularly from this, that God has in mercy accepted the Gentiles, he argues, that the Romans should consecrate and offer themselves up wholly to God. This leads him to mention in particular some Christian duties, ch. xii. *viz.*

14. He exhorts them to be subject to magistrates, ch. xiii. 1,—7. ; the Jews at that time being given to sedition.

15. To love one another heartily, ver. 2, —10. And,

16. To abstain from those vices, which were considered as things indifferent among the Gentiles, ver. 11. *to the end*.

17. He exhorts the Jews and Gentiles in the Christian church to brotherly unity. Ch. xiv. 1.—xv. 13.

18. He

\* **Vide** Michaelis.

OF THE  
F I R S T E P I S T L E  
TO THE  
C O R I N T H I A N S .

**C**ORINTH was a wealthy and luxurious city, situated in Achaia, upon the isthmus or neck of land which joins Morea to the rest of Greece. Near it were celebrated those Isthmian games to which St Paul alludes in this epistle. In this city St Paul had spent two years, planting a Christian church, which consisted, like most of the others, of a mixture of Jewish and Christian converts. But having been absent from them about three years, they were over-run with great disorders, and split into various sects and factions.

This occasioned the following epistle, which was written by St Paul, just before his departure from Ephesus, Acts xx. 31. 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9. about Easter\* in the year of Christ 57, in the third of the emperor Nero. It was intended partly to correct some corruptions and

### H 3 abuses

\* So Michaelis infers from chap. v. 7, 8. "Ye are unleavened," which he interprets, "Ye are now keeping the feast of unleavened bread."

Dr Lardner dates this Epistle a year sooner.

abuses among the Corinthians, and partly to answer certain queries they had proposed to him.

In his introduction, chap. i. 1,—9. he expresses his satisfaction at all the good he knew of them, particularly at their having the gift of the Holy Ghost for the confirmation of the gospel.

And first, he corrects their corruptions and abuses.

1. He rebukes the sectaries among them, and defends himself against one or more false teachers, who had alienated most of the Corinthians from him. *Chap. i. 10. iv. to the end.*

2. He considers the case of a notorious offender, who had married his father's wife, i. e. his own step-mother; orders them to excommunicate this person, and to acknowledge no public fornicator as a brother. *Chap. v. 13.*

3. He reproves them for their covetous and litigious temper, which caused them to prosecute their Christian brethren before heathen courts of judicature. *Chap. vi. 1,—9.*

4. He cautions them against fornication, a vice to which they had been extremely addicted before they were converted, and which some of them still reckoned among the things indifferent, or which might be practised or let alone without breach of morality. *Chap. vi. 10. to the end.*

In

In the next place he answers certain queries they had proposed.

And, 1st, he determines some questions relating to the marriage state, chap. vii. 1. *to the end.*

2. He instructs them how to act with respect to idol-offerings, chap. viii. 1. xi. 1. It could not be unlawful in itself to eat the meat which had been offered to idols ; for the consecration of flesh or wine to an idol did not make it the property of the idol, an idol being nothing, and therefore incapable of property, chap. x. 25,—30. But some Corinthians thought it lawful to go to a feast in the idol temples, which at the same time were places of resort for lewdness, and to eat the sacrifices whilst praises were sung to the idol, chap. viii. 10. x. 20,—22. This was publicly joining in the idolatry. He even advises to abstain from such participation as was lawful, rather than give offence to a weak brother ; which he enforced by his own example, who had abstained from many lawful things rather than create offence to the gospel.

3. He answers a third query, concerning the manner in which women should deliver any thing in public, when called to it by a divine impulse, chap. xi. 2,—17. 18,—34. And here he censures the unusual dress of both sexes in prophesying, which exposed them to the contempt

... the exercise of the ex  
gifts of the Holy Ghost, &c. cha  
xiv.

4. He asserts the resurrection of  
which some among the Corinthian  
and others denied, chap. xv.

He then concludes with some dir  
the Corinthian church, concerning th  
of collecting alms; promises them a v  
salutes some of the members, chap. :

OF THE  
SECOND EPISTLE  
TO THE  
CORINTHIANS.

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St Paul's first epistle had wrought different effects among the Corinthians. Many of them entered into themselves ; they excommunicated the incestuous man ; requested St Paul's return with tears, and vindicated him and his office against the false teacher and his adherents. Others of them still adhered to that adversary of St Paul, expressly denied his apostolical office, and even furnished themselves with pretended arguments from that epistle. He had formerly promised to take a journey from Ephesus to Corinth, thence to visit the Macedonians, and return from them to Corinth, 2 Cor. i. 15, 16. But the unhappy state of the Corinthian church made him alter his intention, verse 23. since he found he must have treated them with severity. Hence his adversaries partly argued, 1st, That St Paul was irresolute and unsteady, and therefore could not be a prophet. 2dly,

The

from Titus, 2 Cor. vii. 5, 6.  
wrote them his second epistle  
of the same year \*, or the begin-

The contents of this Epistle are

1. He gives the Corinthians an  
account of his sufferings to that time, and of  
the consolation he derived from meditating on  
the promises of God, chap. i. 1,—11.

2. He vindicates himself again  
against the charge that he would not consider him as a true  
Christian because he had altered his resolution, chap.  
12.—ii. 4.

3. He forgives the incestuous men  
chap. 5,—11. and tells the Corinthian  
Christian that he longed for their amendment, v.

4. He treats of the office committed  
to him of preaching the redemption, and

of the doctrine he preaches, chap. ii. 14. v. *to the end.*

5. He shews it to be his office, not only to preach the redemption by Christ, but to inculcate certain duties, and particularly that of flying from idolatry, (an oblique censure of those who attended the idol-feasts), chap. vi.

6. He endeavours once more to win their confidence, by telling them how affectionately he was disposed towards them, and rejoiced at their amendment, chap. vii. 1,—16.

7. He exhorts them to a liberal collection for the Christians in Judea, chap. viii. 1. ix. 15.

8. He vindicates himself against those who thought him deficient in the evidences of his apostleship, and imputed his caution, when at Corinth, to his consciousness of not being a true apostle, chap. x. *to the end.*\*

OF

\* See Michaelis.



OF THE  
EPISTLE  
TO THE  
GALATIANS.

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THE Galatians were descended from those Gauls who had formerly invaded Greece, and afterwards settled in Lower Asia. St Paul had preached the gospel among them in the year 51, soon after the council held at Jerusalem, Acts xvi. 6. Asia swarmed at that time with zealots for the law of Moses, who wanted to impose it upon the Gentiles, Acts xv. 1. Soon after St Paul had left the Galatians, these false teachers had got among them, and wanted them to be circumcised, &c. This occasioned the following epistle, which an eminent critic \* thinks was written in the same year, before St Paul left Thessalonica; though others † date it about the end of the year 52, or in the very beginning of 53, before St Paul set out to go to Jerusalem by way of Ephesus.

The subject of this epistle is much the same with that of the epistle to the Romans; only this question is more particularly considered here,

\* Michaelis.

† Dr Lardner, &c.

here, “ Whether circumcision, and the full observance of the Levitical law, were necessary to the salvation of a Christian convert ? ”

It seems these Judaizing Christians, whose indirect views St Paul exposes, chap. vi. 12, 13. at first only laboured to represent circumcision as necessary to salvation, without obliging the Gentiles to observe the whole Levitical law, Acts xv. 1. Gal. v. 3. 9. ; yet they insisted upon the Christians receiving the Jewish festivals and sabbatical years, chap. iv. 10.

Their principal arguments were—

1. “ That the apostles at Jerusalem, St Peter in particular, and the whole church at Jerusalem, considered circumcision as necessary ; that St Paul was only a deputy from that church, and his doctrine only to be regarded so far as it agreed with that of the church of Jerusalem.” This obliged St Paul to declare, not only that the apostles at Jerusalem perfectly concurred with him, but also that he was an immediate apostle of Christ.

2. “ That St Paul himself had changed his opinion, and now preached up the Levitical law,” Gal. i. 8. 10. v. 11. They urged perhaps that he had caused Timothy to be circumcised just before he came to them, Acts xvi. 3. Gal. ii. 3.

3. “ That all the promises of God were made

men from among them to Sion, or and therefore, if the Gentiles des children of the church of Jerusal ought to conform to the rites of that In answer to this, the apostle shews children were not promised to the Je to the ancient or Jebusite Jerusalem.

St Paul frequently directs Christians with the weakness of those Jewish who observed the Levitical law, R. Acts xxi. 23, 24. 26. But the Galatians consisted of Gentiles ; and the whole of this epistle is, that they should not circumcised.

In the two last chapters are some exhortations, designed chiefly against mosities and partialities which these had bred among them.

OF THE  
E P I S T L E  
TO THE  
E P H E S I A N S.

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**E**PHESUS was the chief city of all Asia on this side Mount Taurus. St Paul had passed through it in the year 54, but without making any stay, *Acts xviii. 19,—21.* The following year he returned to Ephesus again, and stayed there three years, *chap. xix.* During his abode there, he completed a very flourishing church of Christians ; the first foundations of which had been laid by some inferior teachers. As Ephesus was frequented by persons of distinction from all parts of Asia Minor, St Paul took the opportunity of preaching in the ancient countries, *ver. 10.* and the other churches of Asia were considered as the daughters of the church of Ephesus ; so that an epistle to the Ephesians was, in effect, an epistle to the other churches of Asia at the same time.

In the year 61, St Paul was carried prisoner to Rome for the first time ; and, during his confinement there, which was not very close, *Acts xxviii. 31, 32.* he wrote the epistles to **Philemon**,

Philemon, the Colossians, the Ephesians, and Philippians.

Hence all these epistles bear so great a resemblance in their style and manner. Of these four, a learned writer \* thinks the epistle to the Ephesians was first written by the apostle in the spring A. D. 61, as soon as conveniently could be, after his friends at Rome had taken a lodging for him, and he was settled in it.

This epistle was intended to establish the Ephesians in the faith ; and, to this end, to give them more exalted views of the love of God, and of the excellence and dignity of Christ : To shew them they were saved by grace, and that the Gentiles (however wretched they had been once) had now equal privileges with the Jews : To encourage them, by declaring with what steadiness he (St Paul) suffered for the truth, and with what earnestness he prayed for their establishment and perseverance in it : And, finally, to engage them to the practice of those duties which became them as Christians †.

The city of Ephesus was distinguished by peculiar vices and sins, which are alluded to in this epistle, and in those to Timothy.

1. It was the genuine seat of the idolatrous worship of Diana, who was called ΣΩΤΕΙΡΑ, or the Saviour Goddess ; in opposition to which

St

:

\* Dr Lardner.

† See Doddridge.

St Paul calls the true Deity ΣΩΤΗΡ, or the Saviour God, in his epistle to Timothy, 1 Tim. i. 1. ii. 3.

2. The Ephesians were remarkable for the practice of superstitious arts, Acts xix. 18, 19.

3. They were vain in their dress, 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10.

4. They were remarkable for lewdness and drunkenness, and gloried in obscenity of language, Eph. v.

An eminent critic \* thinks the Christians of Ephesus were also tainted with the errors of the Essenes ; an account of which the reader will find below, in the introduction to the first epistle to Timothy.

OF

\* M. Michaelis. See his Lectures on the New Testament.

OF THE  
EPISTLE  
TO THE  
PHILIPPIANS.

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PHILIPPI was a city of no great extent, in Macedonia, near the borders of Thrace. The Christian religion was first planted there about the year 51, by St Paul, Acts xvi. who left St Luke and Timothy to carry on the work. He afterwards paid them a second visit, Acts xxi. 6. and, it is probable, saw them afterwards a third time.

This epistle was sent at the same time with the preceding, viz. A. D. 62 or 63. The design of it seems to be, To comfort the Philippians under the concern they had expressed for his imprisonment at Rome : To check a party-spirit that had crept in among them, and to promote, on the contrary, an entire union and harmony of affection : To guard them against being seduced from the purity of the Christian faith by Judaizing teachers : To support them under the trials with which they struggled : and, above all, to inspire them with a concern to adorn their holy profession by the most eminent attainments in the divine life \*.

98

\* See Doddridge.

OF THE  
E P I S T L E  
\* TO THE  
C O L O S S I A N S .

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COLOSSE (or, as it was anciently written, Colassæ) was a considerable city of Phrygia in Asia Minor. St Paul himself had not been at this city when he wrote this epistle, Col. ii. 1. though he had some years before travelled through Phrygia. However, Epaphras had founded a Christian church at Colosse, and probably in the neighbouring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. Col. i. 7. iv. 12, 13. It is probable that some Colossians who had heard St Paul preach at Ephesus, Acts xix. 10. might be converted by him ; and among them Philemon, to whom St Paul addressed his epistle so entituled.

Now the churches of Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, were exposed to more imminent danger of being seduced by false teachers, as they had not received the gospel immediately from an apostle, but from Epaphras ; and as they might question, whether Epaphras did not err in some respects. This occasioned

occasioned St Paul's anxiety for them, Col. ii. 1. and induced him to confirm the doctrine of Epaphras by this epistle, Col. i. 7. iv. 12, 13. which was written from Rome about the same time with the preceding, A. D. 62 or 63. A learned writer \* thinks this and the epistle to Philemon were sent away together by Tychicus and Onesimus, although that to Philemon was probably first delivered.

The more immediate occasion of writing to the Colossians was an epistle St Paul had received from the Laodiceans, chap. iv. 16. which an eminent critic † thinks contained some written queries relating to the doctrines of the Essenes, and this epistle was intended to answer them. What those doctrines were, see in the introduction to the first epistle to Timothy.

This epistle to the Colossians is so like that to the Ephesians, both in language and contents, that the one will greatly illustrate the other.

OF

\* Lardner. See also Michaelis.

† Michaelis.

OF THE  
FIRST EPISTLE  
TO THE  
THESSALONIANS.

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THESSALONICA was in St Paul's time the capital of Macedonia. St Paul had preached the gospel there in the year 51, Acts xvii. : some few among the Jews received the gospel ; but a great multitude of those heathens who confessed one only true God, Σιγήνες, became converts to Christ. Hence the majority of the church consisted of native heathens, who had formerly been idolaters, 1 Thess. i. 9. The Jews, ever jealous of the admission of the Gentiles to the same privileges with themselves, raised such a disturbance, that St Paul, with Silas, was obliged suddenly to withdraw ; they even pursued him to Berea. He left Silas and Timothy there, and fled to Athens, ordering them to follow him, Acts xvii. 14, 15. Timothy did not long continue there with St Paul, but was sent back to Thessalonica, 1 Thess. iii. 1, 2. and, when he returned, found St Paul at Corinth, where he resided a year and

some Jewish members. It is probable that the teachers mentioned in the fifth chapter were converts from Judaism; at least, Greeks as had before been proselytes to the Jewish religion.

2. This church being still in a state of infidelity and oppressed by the powerful Jewish teachers, St Paul therefore, in the three first chapters, endeavours to convince the Thessalonians of the divinity of his gospel, both by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which he had imparted, and by his own conduct with them.

3. An error prevailed with respect to the doctrine of the last judgment. The Thessalonians, like most of the primitive

probably to consist in their entering immediately on the Millenium. This error he combats in the fourth chapter.

4. Some of this church who refused to subject themselves to the teachers, had at the same time given themselves up to disorder; and they seem to have carried on this unruliness, under a pretence of teaching or edifying others: on this account the apostle gives the admonitions in the fifth chapter, ver. 11,—14.

OR

OF THE  
SECOND EPISTLE  
TO THE  
THESSALONIANS

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THE Second Epistle to the Thessal was sent from Corinth soon after the first A. D. 52. St Paul found the Thessal still considered the day of judgment as at hand and that the disorders before reproved still carried on among them. He, therefore, in this second epistle shews, that the day was still distant, from some prophecies not fulfilled; and gives them more particular directions how to conduct themselves to those disorderly persons.

M. Michaelis thinks that 2 Thess. ii. refers to some epistles forged in St Paul's to propagate the above error, and to calculations and false prophecies applied to the same purpose.

OF THE  
F I R S T E P I S T L E  
TO  
T I M O T H Y.

W e have an account of Timothy in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. xvi. 1.—3. and in other parts of the New Testament \*, from which he appears to have been a youth of most excellent qualities, and almost constantly the companion of St Paul.

This first epistle to him is by some dated, A. D. 65, but by others, on better grounds †, about A. D. 56 or 58, at the time of St Paul's journey into Macedonia, Acts xx. 1. This apostle being obliged to retire from Ephesus earlier than he intended, on account of the insurrection raised by Demetrius, Acts xix. left Timothy behind him, to restore perfect order in the church, to fill the ecclesiastical offices, and to withstand false teachers.

As

\* 2 Tim. i. 5. Acts xiv. 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11. 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6. 1 Tim. iv. 12. Heb. xiii. 23. See also the address to 2 Cor. Philipp. Coloss. 1 and 2 Thess. Philem.

† See Michaelis, Lardner. The place where this epistle was written is not certainly agreed; though it is likely St Paul was either in Macedonia, or near it.

As some of the Ephesians would not obey him, and others attempted to force themselves upon him as bishops and ministers, St Paul wrote this epistle, which he might lay before them as his commission: so that it is rather to the Ephesians than to Timothy. See 1 Tim. iii. 18. iv. 6. 12, 13. v. 23.

An eminent critic \* thinks this first epistle to Timothy, and those to the Ephesians and Colossians, were levelled against certain errors prevalent among them, which the Essenes (a Jewish sect) had borrowed from oriental philosophers: They held, 1. That God was surrounded by demons or angels, who were mediators with God, and therefore to be worshipped. 2. That the soul is defiled by the body; that all bodily enjoyments hurt the soul; which they believed to be immortal, though they seem to have denied the resurrection of the body, as it would only render the soul sinful by being re-united to it. 3. That there was a great mystery in numbers, particularly in the number *seven*; they therefore attributed a natural holiness to the seventh or Sabbath day, which they observed more strictly than the other Jews. They spent their time mostly in contemplation; abstained from marriage, and every gratification of the senses; used

\* M. Michaelis.

used washings, and thought it sinful to touch certain things ; regarded wine as poison, &c.

In opposition to these, St Paul, in these three epistles, shews the superiority of Christ to the angels, and warns Christians against worshipping them. He censures the observation of Sabbaths ; rebukes those who forbade marriage, and the touching of certain things ; and who delivered commandments of men concerning meats, and prohibited them. He permits Timothy to drink wine ; blames those who abstain from nourishing their bodies ; and enjoins bodily exercise. He cautions against a philosophy which teaches all these things ; and against persons who assume a great appearance of wisdom and virtue. He delivers Hymenæus over to Satan, because he pretended there was no resurrection of the flesh.

The same learned writer thinks the errors of the Essenes had found their way into these churches through Apollos, Acts xvii. 24. xix. 1,—7. who was of Alexandria, in the neighbourhood of which Essenes prevailed ; and also through the twelve Christians mentioned in Acts xix. 1,—7. who appear but imperfectly acquainted with the Christian doctrines. He conjectures that “ the vagabond Jews, exorcists,” ver. 13. were of this sect.

THIS epistle, according to some, was written by St Paul at Rome, in his first imprisonment there, and was to Timothy in the summer of the year 64. Others, however, rather think it was written in the apostle's last imprisonment there, long before he sealed the truth with his life, which is commonly placed about A.D. 67.

That Timothy was at Ephesus, or in Asia, when this epistle was sent to him, appears from the frequent mention in it of persons residing at Ephesus. The false teachers who had before thrown this church into confusion, grew every day worse; insomuch that not only Hymenaeus, but Philetus,

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word *resurrection*, till at last they denied the thing ; pretending that the resurrection of the dead was only a resurrection from the death of sin, and so was already past. This error was probably derived from the eastern philosophy, which placed the origin of sin in the body. This epistle consists chiefly of affectionate advices to Timothy, thenceforward to be active in opposing those false teachers, and in propagating the gospel.

OF THE  
E P I S T L E  
TO  
T I T U S.

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**T**HIS may be called an epistle to the Cretans. For St Paul meant not so much to instruct Titus, as to furnish him with a rule to lay before the Cretans, to which he might appeal whenever unworthy and unqualified persons attempted to obtrude themselves into the episcopal office.

Titus was a Greek, Gal. ii. 3. and probably owed his conversion to St Paul, Tit. i. 4. who, fourteen years after, took him with him to Jerusalem, to the great council held there in the year 49. And as Titus was of Gentile parents, St Paul would not suffer him to be circumcised, that he might not abridge the liberty of the Gentile converts, Gal. ii. 1,—3. Some years after, St Paul dispatched him to Corinth, to bring him an account of the state of that church, 2 Cor. xii. 18. vii. 6. 13.; and afterwards sent him thither again, to hasten the collection for the poor Christians in Judea, chap. viii. 6. After this we hear

no

no more of him, till he is mentioned in this epistle as having been with St Paul in Crete.

This epistle, according to Dr Lardner, was written towards the end of the year 56, while St Paul was in Macedonia, or near it. But M. Michaelis and others think it was more probably written in St Paul's last progress through the Asiatic churches, between his first and second imprisonment at Rome; though the precise year they are not able to determine. Titus had been left at Crete, to settle the church which St Paul had probably established there in his first journey to Rome, *Acts xxvii. 8.* and afterward, *Tit. i. 5.* The churches in Crete had not hitherto had any bishops and ministers. Titus was to appoint them; but he was to be upon his guard against some of the circumcision, who aspired to ecclesiastical offices.

The island of Crete was the parent of Roman and Greek idolatry: and the Cretans so far excelled other nations in inventing gods, that they were called *the liars.* They were also distinguished for unnatural vices, and a spirit of sedition.

The Cretan converts to Christianity were indeed obliged to forsake idolatry and the worship of images; but as the Cretans were Egyptians by descent, and had long intermixed the whims of Egyptian philosophy with Judaism, and

\* See Michaelis.

OF THE  
EPISTLE  
TO  
PHILEMON.

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PHILEMON seems to have been a substantial man at Colosse, who had a spacious house, in which a part of the Christian church assembled, and in which travelling Christians were entertained, ver. 22. The want of public inns among the ancients made this hospitality needful ; and it was particularly enjoined to Christians to receive one another hospitably ; but, as every individual was not in a condition to entertain Christian strangers, the churches seem to have appointed one or more of their principal members for this purpose, Rom. xvi. 22. This was the office of deacons, so that Philemon had an office in the church ; and indeed he is by some of the ancients entitled bishop of Colosse. Whatever his ministerial office was, he is by St Paul called "his fellow-labourer," ver. 1, 2. His son Archippus, to whom this epistle is also addressed, had just before been deacon in the church of Colosse, Col. iv. 17. He is accordingly mentioned with honour by St Paul, who not only styles

styles him his fellow-labourer, like his father, but also his fellow-soldier.

Philemon seems to have been one of St Paul's first fruits of the church of Ephesus, and not to have been converted like the rest by Epa-phras, but by St Paul himself, Col. iv. 19. having probably come to Ephesus while St Paul was there.

This epistle was written from Rome (at the same time with the epistles to the Colossians, Philippians, &c.) about A. D. 62 or 63. The occasion of it was this: Onesimus, Philemon's slave, had robbed him, and fled to Rome. There St Paul meeting with him, converted him to the Christian faith, and, having kept him some time to be satisfied of his reformation, sends him back to his master with this letter, which has always been admired for its delicacy of sentiment and masterly address, and may be considered as a fine model of epistolary writing.

OF THE  
EPISTLE  
TO THE  
HEBREWS.

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**T**HIS apostolic letter, according to the best authors, both ancient and modern, was the genuine work of St Paul\*; and, according to the ancients, was originally written in the Hebrew or Syriac language, out of which it was translated into Greek by some apostolic person, who is believed to have been either St Luke or Clement. Some eminent critics, however, among the moderns, find reason to think our present Greek copy was not a translation, but the original; and that the ancients were mistaken in this respect.

St Paul, contrary to his usual custom, did not prefix his name to this epistle, for a very obvious reason, that he might not too early awaken the prejudices conceived against him by the Jewish converts, which might have led

\* Many proofs of this may be collected from this Epistle itself. It is evident, from chap. ii. 3: that the writer was not one of Christ's disciples. See Dr Lardner, who has fully discussed this point, and finds reason to give it to St Paul.

led them to throw it aside unperused. It was written towards the end of (or soon after) St Paul's imprisonment at Rome, chap. x. 34. xiii. 22, 23. A. D. 63, to the converted Jews of Palestine, here called Hebrews, as distinguished from the Hellenists or foreign Jews. A severe persecution had deprived them of the apostle St James, and had rendered almost that whole church wavering in the faith. To confirm some, and to recover others from their apostasy, was the purport of this epistle.

As the zealous defenders of the Mosaic law would naturally insist on the divine authority of Moses, on the majesty and glory attending its promulgation by the ministry of angels, and the great privilege it afforded those who adhered to it—The apostle shews,

I. That in all these several articles Christianity had an infinite superiority to the Law.

This topic he pursues from chap. i. to xi. wherein he reminds the believing Hebrews of the extraordinary favour shewn them by God, in sending them a revelation by his own Son, whose glory was far superior to that of angels, chap. i. *throughout*; very naturally inferring from hence, the danger of despising Christ on account of his humiliation, which, in perfect consistence with his dominion over the world to come, was voluntarily submitted to by him for wise and important reasons; particularly to

to deliver us from the fear of death, and to encourage the freedom of our access to God, chap. ii. *tbrougabout*. With the same view he magnifies Christ as superior to Moses their great legislator ; and from the punishment inflicted on those who rebelled against the authority of Moses, infers the danger of contemning the promises of the gospel, chap. iii. 1,—13. And as it was an easy transition to call to mind on this occasion that rest in Canaan to which the authority invested in Moses was intended to lead them, the apostle hence cautions them against unbelief, as what would prevent their entering into a superior state of rest to what the Jews ever enjoyed, chap. iii. 14. iv. 11. This caution is still further enforced by awful views of God's omniscience, and a lively representation of the high priesthood of Christ, chap. iv. 12. v. 14. In the next place, he intimates the very hopeless situation of those who apostatize from Christianity, chap. vi. 1,—9. ; and then, for the comfort and confirmation of sincere believers, displays to them the goodness of God, and his faithful adherence to his holy engagements ; the performance of which is sealed by the entrance of Christ into heaven as our forerunner, chap. vi. 9. *to the end.* Still further to illustrate the character of our Lord, he enters into a parallel between him and Melchizedec as to their title

and descent ; and, from instances wherein the priesthood of Melchizedec excelled the Levitical, infers that the glory of the priesthood of Christ surpassed that under the law, chap. vii. 1,—17. From these premises the apostle argues, that the Aaronical priesthood was not only excelled, but consummated by that of Christ, to which it was only introductory and subservient, and, of course, that the obligation of the law was henceforth dissolved, chap. vii. 18. *to the end.* Then recapitulating what he had already demonstrated concerning the superior dignity of Christ's priesthood, he thence illustrates the distinguished excellence of the new covenant, as not only foretold by Jeremiah, but evidently enriched with much better promises than the Old, chap. viii. *througbout:* Explaining further the doctrine of the priesthood and intercession of Christ, by comparing it with what the Jewish high-priests did on the great day of atonement, chap. ix. 1,—14. Afterwards he enlarges on the necessity of shedding Christ's blood, and the sufficiency of the atonement made by it, chap. ix. 15. *to the end;* and proves that the legal ceremonies could not by any means purify the conscience ; whence he infers the insufficiency of the Mosaic law, and the necessity of looking beyond it, chap. x. 1,—15. He then urges the Hebrews to improve the privileges which such an high priest

priest and covenant conferred on them, to the purposes of approaching God with confidence, to a constant attendance on his worship, and most benevolent regards to each other, chap. x. 15,—25.

The apostle having thus obviated the insinuations and objections of the Jews, for the satisfaction and establishment of the believing Hebrews, proceeds,

II. To prepare and fortify their minds against the storm of persecution which in part had already befallen them, and was likely to continue, and be often renewed. He reminds them of those extremities they had endured, and of the fatal effects which would attend their apostasy, chap. x. 26. *to the end*; calling to their remembrance the eminent examples of faith and fortitude exhibited by holy men, and recorded in the Old Testament, chap. xi. 1,—29. He concludes his discourse with glancing at many other illustrious worthies; and, besides those recorded in Scripture, refers to the case of several who suffered under the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. 2 Maccab. viii. &c. xi. 30. xii. 2.

Having thus finished the argumentative part of the epistle, the apostle proceeds to a general application, in which he exhorts the Hebrew Christians to patience, peace, and holiness, chap. xiii. 3,—14.; cautions them against secular

...  
the divine care, stedfastness in the  
of the truth, a life of thankful  
and benevolence to man, chap. x  
and concludes the whole with re  
their pious ministers to their partic  
• entreating their prayers, saluting  
pronouncing on them a solemn  
chap. xiii. 17. *to the end.*

OF THE  
CATHOLIC EPISTLE  
OF  
ST JAMES.

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**T**HIS and the following epistles are probably called *catholic* or *general*, because most of them were written, not to particular churches, but to the faithful dispersed throughout whole countries. The second and third epistles of St John are added to them, only because they were written by the same hand that wrote the first, and would have been lost had they been copied separately.

This epistle was written by St James the less, the son of Alpheus or Cleophas, stiled the brother, i. e. kinsman of our Lord, who stately resided at Jerusalem, and is said by the ancients to have been the first bishop of that city ; where he is believed to have suffered martyrdom in the former part of the year 62, and to have written this epistle a short time before his death, which a learned writer\* thinks might be partly occasioned by the offence taken at this apostolic letter.

... partly to warn them against certain vices.

But Dr Lardner thinks that this epistle is written to all Jews, of every denomination throughout the world, whether Christians or otherwise. For this reason the apostle does not wish them grace or peace from Jesus Christ, though he does not dissemble his own character; nor does he conclude with any benediction. And though a large part of this epistle is applicable to Christians, it contains several paragraphs which seem particularly addressed to unbelieving Jews, chap. 10. chap. v. 1,--6. &c.

OF THE  
F I R S T E P I S T L E  
OF  
S T P E T E R.

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**T**HIS apostolic letter is probably addressed to such Gentiles as had forsaken idolatry and believed in the true God, without having been circumcised, and who afterwards became Christians ; such as Cornelius the centurion ; i. e. Christians from among the proselytes ; “ Elect “ (or declared to be such) through sanctifica-“ tion of the Spirit \*.” The whole epistle abounds in assurances that these converts were regenerate and become children of God without Levitical sacrifices, merely through Christ.

This epistle was written from a city called by St. Peter Babylon. This some think to have been Babylon in Assyria, which, though demolished, might possibly have some few Christians in its neighbourhood ; however, the generality, both ancients and moderns, suppose it to have been a figurative name for Rome. But M. Michaelis proposes a query, Whether Jerusalem might not be shadowed under that name ?

\* See ch. i. 2. compared with Acts x. 44,—17. xi. 15,—17.

St Peter's chiet design is, To c  
doctrine of St Paul, which the fal  
pretended he was opposing ; and to  
proselytes, that they stood in the tr  
God, chap. v. 12. With this vie  
them elect, and mentions, that the  
declared such by the effusion of  
Ghost upon them, chap. i. 1, 2.  
them, that they were regenerate w  
cumcision, merely through the gos  
surrection of Christ, ver. 3, 4. 21,—  
that their sufferings were no argume  
being under the displeasure of G  
Jews imagined, ver. 6,—12. He re  
it to them, to hope for grace to the ei  
He testifies, that they were not rec  
the paschal lamb, but through Ch

OF THE  
SECOND EPISTLE  
OF  
ST PETER.

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**T**HIS Second Epistle is supposed to have been written many years after the former, viz. in A. D. 67, a short time before St Peter's martyrdom, which happened in 68, and to which he alludes in one or two places, ch. i. 13, 14.

The general design of this epistle is, To confirm the doctrines and instructions delivered in the former epistle ; “ To excite the Christian converts, to adorn and stedfastly adhere to their holy religion, as a religion proceeding from God, notwithstanding the artifices of false teachers, whose character is at large described ; and notwithstanding the persecution of their bitter and inveterate enemies.”

The genuineness of this epistle has been doubted, from the peculiar style of the 2d chapter, which is different from the other parts of St Peter's writings. Bp. Sherlock supposes, that the apostle, describing in that chapter the character of such seducers as endangered the faith of the Christian converts, adopts the language and sentiments of some Jewish author, containing a strong description in the eastern manner, of some false prophets in that, or an earlier age.

OF

also alludes to the pernicious doctrine of other Gnostics, especially in the admonition to walk in the light, to keep undefiled from sins, and to abstain from idols. For while he thus taught that the law of Moses was abominable, the others maintained, that eating things offered to idols, and fornication, were indifferent.

In opposition to those errors, St. John sets down three positions: 1. That it is necessary to walk in the light, and keep clear of flesh and blood in order to partake of the kingdom of God. 2. That it is necessary to keep the new commandment of loving one another. 3. That Jesus Christ was the Son of God, not only at his baptism, but also at the shedding of his blood.

This little treatise or epistle is directed to Christians, wheresoever dispersed; and is supposed to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem.

OF THE  
SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLES  
OR  
ST. JOHN.

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THESE are improperly denominated *cathe-lic* or *general*, being inscribed to two single persons ; the one to some lady of distinction, the other to Gaius, or Caius ; probably the same person whom St Paul at Corinth styles his host, Rom. xvi. 23. 1 Cor. i. 14. and who is celebrated for his hospitality to his brethren. But a learned writer \* rather thinks he was an eminent Christian, who lived in some city of Asia not far from Ephesus, where St John chiefly resided after he had left Judea.

These letters are conjectured to have been sent about the same time with, or soon after the former.

OF

\* Dr Lardner.

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**T**HIS was written by Jude, or Judas brother of James the less. The remarkable similarity between this and part of the second epistle of Peter, was probably owing to the writers drawing their character of the teachers, from the description given of false prophets in some ancient Jewish authors and it is also possible that St Jude might have had the second epistle of St Peter before them. They both prove against certain heretics (probably the Gnostics), that a great day of judgment is impending, and conclude, from the judgments of God formerly exerted, that he will be an avenger of evil.

This is believed to have been written

OF THE  
REVELATION  
OF  
ST JOHN.

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**T**HIS prophetical book is agreed to have been written by St John the Evangelist, who, according to Eusebius, was banished to Patmos, an isle in the Ægean sea, and there received the visions contained in this book, in the last year of the reign of Domitian, about the year 96. Others suppose it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem. This is the opinion of M. Michaelis, who dates it so early as the time of Claudius or Nero, long before St John's Gospels or Epistles. In this he follows the opinion of Sir Isaac Newton, who concludes it must have been composed in an early period of St John's life, because the style, he thinks, abounds with Hebraisms, and is not penned in such good and fluent Greek as the Gospels and Epistles, which he supposes were written when the apostle had acquired a more perfect knowledge of the Greek tongue. Other critics, however, do not allow so great a difference of language between this and St John's other writings; at least not more than what they think may be occasioned by the differ-

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ence

ence of subject, arising from allusions to the prophetic books of the Old Testament, or from the abruptness and obscurity of the prophetic style. It is again urged, that the Revelation mentions no other heresy as flourishing, but that of the Nicolaitans\*, which subsisted long before that of Cerinthus, against which St John wrote his Gospel between A. D. 65 and 68, and therefore the Revelation must have been written long before. In opposition to this, it is doubted whether the seven churches of Asia were founded so early as the times of Claudius or Nero ; or had at least undergone such great changes and revolutions as are alluded to in this book. It has likewise been thought improbable, that the apostle should give this prophetic and mysterious book before ever he had delivered a plain and simple narrative of the life of his Master. The latter, as it would be of the greatest use to Christians, would naturally be first afforded them ; and the apostles would be most likely to lay down the great and fundamental doctrines of Christianity in general, before they would think of entering into the state of particular churches, or describe  
the

\* The Nicolaitans, according to ancient writers, were a sect who taught the lawfulness of lewdness and idolatrous sacrifices : they were so called from one Nicolas their founder. By Nicolaitans in Scripture are thought to be meant, in general, lewd and profligate persons, who aim at nothing but their own secular advantage.

the events of future times, whether near or remote.

Some other arguments for the more early date of this book are given by M. Michaelis, and others ; but, as they allow them all to be subordinate to that urged above from the uncommon prevalence of the oriental idioms in this book beyond what are found in the other writings of St John, this will not be judged very decisive, if, after all, it should appear that this is no more than the natural consequence of the subject, and that St John, expressing in Greek the images of the ancient Hebrew prophets, had a particular reason for adopting their phraseology and idioms, as being inseparable from the prophetic style \*. So that, upon the whole, perhaps we may reasonably abide by the express testimony of Irenæus †, that this sacred book was written in the reign of Domitian, as that ancient father was a disciple of Polycarp, who had been a disciple of St John himself.

But at whatever period of his life the Revelation was composed, there is strong internal evidence,

\* See what is urged on the subject of prophetic style, in Dr Hurd's Lectures, referred to below. See particularly Sermon the 9th.

† *Advers. Hæres.* lib. vi. cap. 30. p. 449. ed. Grab. See also Eusebius, *Chron.* lib. i. Ed. Scal. p. 80. *Vide etiam* p. 164. *Lib. posterioris & Chron.* *Can.* p. 208. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. 18. *Bp. Newton on the Prophecies*, vol. iii. p. 14, 15.

evidence \*, as well as the most convincing positive testimony, that this book was written by St John the evangelist †. It is no less obvious, that the contents are of a prophetic nature, and that they exhibit a series of visions, descriptive of very important events that were to succeed in the course of ages.

Many ingenious and learned men have undertaken to illustrate this sacred book, and even to point out very precisely the particular events predicted by its inspired author ; but their success has not always been answerable to their sanguine expectations. Perhaps a complete and perfect commentary must be reserved for future ages, when many of the events have taken place which are predicted in it, but remain at present unaccomplished.

However, the pious student ought not to be discouraged from the perusal of these divine prophecies ; and it is certain that he could never sit down to consider them with so much advantage as he can at present, when he is furnished with so excellent an introduction to the study of these and all other prophecies which regard the Christian church, in the Lectures lately published by the learned and ingenious preacher at Lincoln's-Inn ‡.

To

\* See Dr Twells, M. Michaclis, &c.

† See Lardner, Doddridge, &c.

‡ Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies concerning the

To this admired writer it will be sufficient here to refer the reader, and he will lead him to as excellent a commentator in the great and admirable Joseph Mede; to whose works these new lectures are a most useful introduction. It will be sufficient here to give a short extract from the latter, to assist the reader in forming a distinct idea of the method in which the whole book of the Apocalypse is disposed; which he will readily do, if he observes that it is resolvable into three great parts.

The first part is that of the epistles to the seven churches, contained in the three first chapters. This, as containing little or nothing prophetic, is not at all considered by Mr Mede.

The second part (with which Mr Mede begins his commentary) is that of the sealed book, from chap. iv. to chap. x. and contains the fates of the Roman empire, or its civil revolutions; yet with a reference still to the state and fortune of the Christian church.

The third part is that of the open book, with what follows to the end; and exhibits, in a more minute and extended view, the fates of the Christian church, especially during its apostasy, and after its recovery from it.

This

the Christian Church, and in particular concerning the Church of Papal Rome, in Twelve Sermons, &c. by Richard Hurd, D.D. London, 1772. 8vo.

given in this place, in order to connec  
second and third parts, and to shew their  
respondence and contemporaneity. See  
Mede's Clavis, p. 424, and Comment. .  
calypt. p. 476.

The second part of the last division (chap. xii. *to the end*) gives a detailed acc  
of what should befall the Christian church  
distinct, and several of them synchronic  
sions.

*HERE we should conclude, but as the ci  
reader may desire to be informed how the predi  
revealed in this book of St John have usually  
interpreted and applied by Protestants, we shall  
sistent with our subject, subjoin, A Key to the  
phecies contained in the Revelation. This*

A  
K E Y  
TO THE  
*P R O P H E C I E S*  
CONTAINED IN THE  
REVELATION.

NOTHING of a prophetical nature occurs in the first three chapters, except, 1. what is said concerning the church of Ephesus, that her “candlestick shall be removed out of its place,” which is now verified, not only in this, but in all the other Asiatic churches which existed at that time; the light of the gospel having been taken from them, not only by their heresies and divisions from within, but by the arms of the Saracens from without: And, 2. concerning the church of Smyrna, that she shall “have tribulation ten days;” that is, in prophetic language, ten years; referring to the persecution of Dioclesian, which alone of all the general persecutions lasted so long.

The next five chapters relate to the opening of the seven seals; and by these seals are intimated so many different periods of the prophecy. Six of those seals are opened in the sixth and seventh chapters.

The first seal or period is memorable for conquests. It commences with Vespasian, and terminates

great was the slaughter and devastation occasioned by the contending parties.

The third seal is characterised by a rigorous execution of justice, and an abundant provision of wine, and oil. It commences with Septimius and Alexander Severus were just and vere emperors, and at the same time highly regarded for the regard they paid to the internal welfare of their people, by procuring them plenty of all thing, and particularly corn, wine, and oil. The period lasted during the reigns of the Septimian family.

The fourth seal is distinguished by a concur of evils, such as war, famine, pestilence, and beasts; by all which the Roman empire was remarkably infested from the reign of Maximin to that of Dioclesian.

The fifth seal begins at Dioclesian, and is signified by the great persecution, from whence

The seventh seal includes under it the remaining parts of the prophecy, and comprehends seven periods, distinguished by the sounding of seven trumpets.

As the seals foretold the state of the Roman empire before and till it became Christian, so the trumpets foreshow the fate of it afterwards ; each trumpet being an alarm to one nation or other, rousing them up to overthrow that empire.

Four of these trumpets are sounded in the eighth chapter.

At the sounding of the first, Alaric and his Goths invade the Roman empire, besiege Rome twice, and set it on fire in several places. At the sounding of the second, Attila and his Huns waste the Roman provinces, and compel the eastern emperor Theodosius the Second, and the western emperor Valentinian the Third, to submit to shameful terms. At the sounding of the third, Genseric and his Vandals arrive from Africa ; spoil and plunder Rome, and set sail again with immense wealth and innumerable captives. At the sounding of the fourth, Odoacer and the Heruli put an end to the very name of the western empire ; Theodoric founds the kingdom of the Ostrogoths in Italy ; and at last Italy becomes a province of the eastern empire, Rome being governed by a duke under the Exarch of Ravenna.

As the foregoing trumpets relate chiefly to the downfall of the western empire, so do the two following to that of the eastern. They are sounded in the ninth, tenth, and part of the eleventh chapter.

At

At the sounding of the fifth trumpet, **Mahomet**, that blazing star, appears, opens the bottomless pit, and with his locusts, the Arabians, darkens the sun and air. And, at the sounding of the sixth, a period not yet finished, the four angels, that is, the four sultanies, or leaders of the Turks and Othmans, are loosed from the river Euphrates. The Greek, or eastern empire, was cruelly "hurt and tormented" under the fifth trumpet; but, under the sixth, it was "slain," and utterly destroyed.

The Latin, or western church, being in no wise reclaimed by the ruin of the Greek, or eastern, but still persisting in its idolatry and wickedness; at the beginning of the tenth chapter, and under the sound of this sixth trumpet, is introduced a vision preparative to the prophecies respecting the western church, wherein an angel is represented having in his hand a little book, or codicil, describing the calamities that should overtake that church. The measuring of the temple, &c. shews, that during all this period there will be some true Christians, who will conform themselves to the rule of God's word, even whilst the outer court, that is, the external and more extensive part of this temple or church, is trodden under foot by Gentiles, i. e. such Christians as, in their idolatrous worship and persecuting practice, resemble and out-do the Gentiles themselves. Yet, against these corrupters of religion, there will always be some true witnesses to protest, who, however they may be over-borne at times, and in appearance reduced to death, yet will arise again from

from time to time, till at last they triumph and gloriously ascend. The eleventh chapter concludes with the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

In the twelfth chapter, by the woman bearing a man-child is to be understood the Christian church; by the great red dragon, the heathen Roman empire; by the man-child, whom the woman bore, Constantine the Great; and by the war in heaven, the contests between the Christian and heathen religions.

In the thirteenth chapter, by the beast with seven heads and ten horns, unto whom the dragon gave his power, seat, and great authority, is to be understood, not Pagan but Christian, not imperial but papal Rome; in submitting to whose religion, the world did in effect submit again to the religion of the dragon. The ten-horned beast therefore represents the Romish church and state in general; but the beast with two horns like a lamb is the Roman clergy; and that image of the ten-horned beast, which the two-horned beast caused to be made and inspired with life, is the Pope; whose number is 666, according to the numerical powers of the letters constituting the Roman name *Aeternus, Latinus*, viz.

Α, 30. Α, 1. Τ, 300. Ε, 5. Ι, 10. Ν, 50. Ο, 7. Σ, 200. (666.) Or its equivalent in Hebrew, **רָמִים** *Ramim*, viz. ר, 200. מ, 6. נ, 40. ב, 10. ב, 10. נ, 400. (666.)

Chapter xiv. By the lamb on mount Sion is meant Jesus; by the hundred forty and four thousand,

sand, his church and followers ; by the angel preaching the everlasting gospel, the first principal effort made towards a reformation by that public opposition formed against the worship of, saints and images, by emperors and bishops, in the eighth and ninth centuries ; by the angel crying, " Babylon is fallen," the Waldenses and Albigenses, who pronounced the church of Rome to be the Apocalypsic Babylon, and denounced her destruction ; and, by the third angel, Martin Luther and his fellow-reformers, who protested against all the corruptions of the church of Rome, as destructive to salvation.

Here we may put a period to this short analysis of the Revelations, as what follows seems not to be of such obvious interpretation as the preceding, and therefore the curious reader will consult the bishop's Dissertations themselves. In reading those, or any other illustrations of the Prophecies contained in this mysterious book, he will do well always to have before him the judicious work of Joseph Mede, above quoted.

*THE END.*

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